

Community Policing, Vigilante Security Apparatus and Security Challenges in Nigeria: a Lesson from Britain and Igbo Traditional Society of Nigeria

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Abstract

Community policing is neither foreign nor new to Africans in that elements of community model of policing already existed in Africa prior to European colonialism, for example, the traditional Igbo society had its own form of community policing long before the advent of European colonialism. The European colonialism alienated the people from the colonial police which continued even after independence resulting in the proliferation of vigilante security apparatus in Nigeria. The proliferation of vigilante groups further deteriorated the relationship between the people and the police thereby worsening the security challenges even with the adoption of western style community policing in Nigeria. Our conclusions are that, one, the disconnect between the police and the community, unlike in Britain, resulted in the proliferation of vigilante security apparatus in Nigeria; and two, the mutual distrust or mistrust between the police and vigilante worsened security challenges in Nigeria.

Introduction

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

But the advent of European colonialism changed everything, as the colonial police alienated themselves from the people which continued in the post-colonial or post-independence Nigeria. The consequence of this alienation is serious security challenges in Nigeria even with the proliferation of vigilante security apparatus. By 2003, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) sent some policemen to Britain to be trained in community policing with the hope of adapting it to the Nigerian context. We suggest that the British model of community policing is a good example of community policing. But the poor human development indices (HDI) in Nigeria are likely to pose serious challenges to the prospects of community policing in Nigeria.

Understanding Community Policing

Community policing or neighbourhood policing or proximity policing has been variously defined, but they are all mainly different ways of saying the same thing. For example, Laure Ikuteyijo and Kemi Rotimi write that community policing entails community partnership in creating a safe and secure environment for all in which people take active part in their own affairs¹. In the same vein, B. Stipak defines community policing as a management strategy that promotes the joint responsibility of citizens and the police for community safety, through working partnerships and interpersonal contact².

Similarly, Van Rooyen conceives community policing as a philosophy and strategy which is based on a partnership between the community and the police to find creative solutions for contemporary community problems, crime and other related matters³. According to SAPS Police, community policing is a philosophy that guides police community partnerships and a problem-solving approach responsive to the needs of the community⁴. To Masrofski, Worden and Snipes, community policing means making the police more cooperative with those who are not police⁵. According to C.F. Adams community policing refers to a shift from a military inspired approach to fighting crime to one that relies on forming partnership with constituents⁶.

Consequently, community policing has become a term used by both professionals and scholars alike to replace other terms such as foot patrol, crime prevention, problem-oriented policing, community-oriented policing, police-community relations and more⁷. Therefore, community policing is a policing strategy or philosophy based on the notion that community interaction and support can help control crime and reduce fear, with community members helping to identify suspects, detain vandals and bring problems to the attention of police⁸.

In other words, community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem solving techniques, which proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder and fear of crime⁹. Perhaps, the inference that can be distilled from these definitions is that community policing, unlike the authoritarian and autocratic character

and top-down approach of traditional policing, is democratic, participatory and consultative, and bottom-top in approach which is why it is referred to as democracy in action¹⁰.

However, no matter how community policing is defined, it represents a paradigm shift away from traditional policing or traditional model of policing. The central theme is the collaboration of efforts between the police and the residence in combating crime and fear of crime. Community policing does not imply that the police are no longer in authority or that the primary duty of preserving law and order is subordinated¹¹, rather community policing entails community partnership in creating a safe and secure environment for all¹².

From the foregoing the basic elements or core components of community policing include community partnerships, organizational transformation and problem solving¹³. Community partnership is collaborative if partnerships between the law enforcement agency and the individuals and organization they serve, develop solutions to problems and increase trust in police. It involves confidence building measures and capacity building in which the partnerships are forged in conjunction with the other government agencies, community members and groups, human and social service providers, private businesses, and the media¹⁴. This may involve establishment of ad hoc community liaison, where a community police officers goes out into the community and tries to find responsive people who are on the side of the police to serve as police informants¹⁵. Thus, through community partnership, community policing seeks to recontextualize the police, that is to say, community policing involves efforts to better link police and community¹⁶.

In this regard, Professor David Bayley notes that some forces require community police officers to handle calls for police, many do not. Almost all community police officers are responsible for community crime prevention one way or the other. Some do foot patrolling, many do not. Some are given responsibility for diagnosing the needs of communities and coming up with solutions, utilizing police and non-police resources. Others are simply responsible for delivering traditional police services but are enjoined to do so in a more responsive and community-oriented way¹⁷.

Also, Jack R. Greene states that community policing has increased the police forms to include issues such as public safety, crime prevention, fear of crime and community quality of life. Thus, communities are seen as participants in shaping police objectives and interventions as well as evaluating them. Capacity building in community policing or community-police partnership is focused on crime prevention and victim assistance. The police strengthens citizens' capacity and resolve to resist crime and recover from it¹⁸. Therefore, effective community policing depends on optimizing positive contact between patrol officer and community members. Police departments may supplement automobile patrols with foot, bicycle, scooter and horseback as well as adding "mini-stations" to bring police closer to the community. Regular community meetings and for a will afford police and the community members opportunity to air concerns or views and find ways to address them. Officers working long-term assignments on the same shift and beat will become aware of the day-to-day or daily workings of the community. There is need for increase police presence in the community in order to reduce fear of crime among the community members thereby creating a sense of neighborhood security. Fear must be reduced if community members are to participate actively in policing, because people will not aid if they feel that their actions will jeopardize their safety¹⁹.

More importantly, people will not partner with the police if they suspect that the police will reveal their identity to the criminal gangs. Police recognize the need for cooperation with the community if they must deserve community supports when encouraging community members to come forth with relevant information. Police should realize that trust will enable them to gain greater access to valuable information from the community that

could lead to the solution and prevention of crime, engender support for needed crime-control measures, and provide an opportunity for the police officers to establish a working relationship with the community²⁰.

The next core component of community policing is organizational transformation which involves transforming or fundamentally changing the organizational culture, leadership and management structure, labour relations, strategic planning processes, performance evaluation technique and operational transparency or *modus operandi*, the geographic assignment of officers, the allotment of fiscal resources, recruitment and hiring practices, training and information gathering systems. This is to create an organization infrastructure that can best support proactive operation intended to prevent crime²¹.

In line with this, David Bayley writes that in some forces, community policing is a new command often based in headquarters, a new unit of specialization within the police while in others, it is function that is integrated into the existing command structure, though rarer than the former. Therefore, in terms of personnel, that is, recruitment and training, the major choice is whether community policing is carried out by new specialists or by traditional police workers. Community policing personnel may be located at headquarters, in police stations or in disbursed offices created, often with material or financial contributions from communities. In the case of volunteers, the question is whether community policing is strictly performed by the police themselves, or whether the community is to be enlisted, especially in the form of volunteers, to work with the police²².

Finally, the next core component of community policing, that is, problem-solving is the processes of engaging in the proactive and systematic examination of identified problems to develop and rigorously evaluate effective responses. Community model of policing requires police to become proficient in what is known as the SARA model of problem solving which includes scanning, analysis, response and assessment. Scanning (S) involves identifying and prioritizing problems. Analysis (A) involves researching what is known about the problem or subjecting the identified problem into thorough investigation. Response (R) entails developing solutions to bring about lasting reductions in the number and extent of problems. Lastly, assessment (A) involves evaluating or appraising the success of the responses²³. Whilst, traditional law enforcement practice, that is, traditional model of policing are reactive and emphasize measures such as response times, arrest rates, etc; community policing encourages police to proactively solve community problems and address the factors that contribute to crime rather than how police respond to crime²⁴.

Problem-solving in community policing is problem specific and focus. The main thrust is to make the police more thoughtful about the problems they address and their methods of intervention. It makes the police to be more analytic²⁵. Problem-solving is based on the assumption that crime and disorder can be reduced in small geographic areas by carefully study the characteristic of problem in the area and then applying the appropriate resources. Community participation in identifying and setting priorities will contribute to effective problem-solving efforts by the community and the police. Cooperative problem-solving also reinforces trust, facilitates the exchange of information, and leads to the identification of other area that could benefit from the mutual attention of the police and the community²⁶.

Bertus R. Ferreira identifies three major models of community policing, viz, crime prevention and peace preservation policing, communications policing and community building policing. Crime prevention and peace preservation model entails securing the active cooperation and participation of the community in order to prevent crimes and preserve peace in the community. In other words, the model focuses on crime prevention and peace preservation through securing active cooperation, supports and participation of the

community. This model also includes the involvement of the community in monitoring and controlling police activities²⁷.

Communications policing sees the police as agents of consensus by making communities cooperative and bearers of a sense of traditional which could be achieved through intervention with the community members as well as vertical or two-way flow of information so that they can provide for their own security and take necessary precautions. This model is best describes as the policing of communications in ensuring information flow about risk, safety and security of the community. It is all about establishing channels of communication between the police and the community²⁸.

Community building policing emphasized capacity building by the police in the communities, that is, the police must help to build communities and take social as apposed to legal action. To build capacity, the police needs to perpetrate the community in all its aspects and develop personal relationships at beat level. The police must view their role in neighborhood as a means of re-establishing the neighbouring relationships and strengthening the institutions that makes a community competent and able to deal with its problems²⁹.

Vigilante and Neighbourhood Watch Clarified

Although, some vigilante security outfits may have started as neighbourhood watch, but they are not exactly the same. Vigilante and neighbourhood watch are both private security organizations primarily made up of volunteers but that is as far as the similarity goes. Vigilante is a private individual who legally or illegally punishes an alleged law breaker, or participates in a group, which metes out extralegal punishment to an alleged lawbreaker³⁰. Following from this definition, vigilante group therefore metes out extra-legal or extra-judicial punishment to an alleged lawbreaker. However, not all vigilante activities are illegal, because sometimes vigilante began by apprehending or catching criminals and hand them over to the police.

Vigilante justice is spurred on by the idea that criminal punishment is either non-existent or insufficient for the crime, usually based on the perception that the government is ineffective in enforcing the law and this need community members to volunteer to protect the community. In other instances, a person may choose a role of vigilante as a result of personal experience as opposed to social demand. Persons seen as “escaping from the law” or “above the law” are sometimes the targets of vigilantism. It may target persons or organizations involved in illegal activities in general or it may be aimed against a specific group or type of activity, for example, police corruption. Vigilante behaviour may differ in degree of violence, and in some cases vigilantes may assault targets verbally, physically attack them or vandalize their property. Any person who defies the law to further justice is a vigilante, and thus, violence is not a necessary criterion³¹.

Neighbourhood watch, on the other hand, is an organized group of citizens devoted to crime and vandalism prevention within a neighborhood. Therefore, members of neighbourhood watch and others who use legal means of bringing people to justice are not considered vigilantes. In other words, neighbourhood crime watch is not vigilante security apparatus, because when suspecting criminal activities, members of neighbourhood watch or crime watch are encouraged to contact authorities or police and not to intervene³². Neighbourhood watches, therefore, are police informants in that they give police relevant information that helps the police in their investigations and crime preventions.

In Nigeria, ethnic militias or militant groups have been erroneously taken to be vigilante groups. Although, some ethnic militias are involved in vigilante service, they are not strictly speaking vigilante security apparatus in that they are engaged in other activities which are not necessarily or primarily vigilante service. The point is that vigilante activities are not

the primary activities or roles of the ethnic militant groups like Odua People's Congress (OPC), Movement for Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), etc. It so happened that along the line, these radical ethnic organizations began to assume or usurp the responsibilities of vigilante security. The traditional concept of vigilante in Nigeria, however, exclusively refers to an un-armed voluntary citizens or groups created in local communities to help the security agents by arresting suspected criminals or delinquents and handing them over to the police.

The Nigerian Police and the Emergence of Vigilante Security Apparatus in Nigeria

Prior to the advent of the Nigeria Police Force in 1889 by the British colonial administration, there were various groups performing the role of policing the communities in what is today known as Nigeria. In some cases like Igbo pre-colonial societies, the role of policing or protecting lives and property of the people was the responsibility of the entire community even though it was facilitated by the age grade and masquerade societies. It was this model of community policing that colonial police supplanted with the colonial police in 1889 to provide quasi-military assistance to the British colonial administration in Nigeria. According to Tekena Tamuno:

By far the most crucial factor in understanding the existence in Nigeria of semi-military police lay in the nature of Nigerian opposition to British jurisdiction and rule... These sources of friction... emphasized the need for troops and police as ready instrument of enforcing government orders when peaceful overtures failed... In the circumstances, the police formed the frontline of the defence in Britain's attempts to maintain law and order... both soldiers and the police, the distinction was meaningless³³.

Similarly, Ahmed S. Garba notes that the idea of the modern Nigerian police is a creation of colonial rule in which its history and function began in serving the interest of the British colonial rule. It was organized as a quasi-military squad by the colonial government as an instrument of riot control, oppression and suppression. In other words, the colonial police was established neither as agent for promoting the rule of law, human rights, community safety nor for delivering social service, rather, the police was used in primitive expedition to further the goal of colonial annexation of territories and to quench protests as well as opposition against colonial exploitation³⁴.

In the same vein, K. Rotimi, E. E. Alemika and I. Chukwuma, N. Okafor, and Ikuteyijo describe policing in the colonial era as anti-people. In fact the establishment of the colonial police was more to serve and protect the commercial interest of the colonial masters. This pitched the police against the people they were meant to protect and there were series of clashes between both parties³⁵. So right from the beginning, the purpose of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) was to protect government functionaries sometimes against "natives"³⁶. The post-colonial Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is a carryover from the colonial epoch³⁷. In this respect the character of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has not changed. Military rule only emboldened the military character of the Nigerian police. As in the colonial period, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has deliberately been designed to appear tough and intimidating before the civilians, thus, alienating or disconnecting the people from the police more³⁸.

The history of community-police relation in Nigeria, thus, has been described as frosty as the idea of policing imposed on the country by the colonial master was calculated to foster an antagonism between the policed and the police³⁹.

To make matters worse, the corruption perception of the Nigerian police by the Nigerian people over the years heightened consequently the Nigerian police is perceived as the most corrupt government institution both locally and internationally worsening

community-police relation. Under this state of affairs, the Nigerian police has been unable to fight crime let alone prevent it.

Historically, in Nigeria, night guards and vigilante groups have emerged in response to theft and armed robbery⁴⁰. Vigilante groups existed in Nigeria for decades not only under civilian rule, but also during the previous military regimes of Generals Babangida, Abacha and Abubakar. They have traditionally been seen as an extension to the work of law enforcement officers in a country with high level of delinquency and lack of police training, equipment and personnel. Thus, the traditional concept of vigilante in Nigeria exclusively refers to un-armed voluntary citizen or group created in local communities to help the security forces confront common criminality and social violence by arresting suspected delinquents and handing them over to the police. The Nigerian law recognizes the lawfulness of vigilante groups arresting suspected criminals provided that they are unarmed and that the suspect is immediately handed over to the police⁴¹.

But with the corruption in the police, the suspected criminal easily find their ways back in the streets terrorizing people and even in extreme cases unleashing vengeance on those people that handed them over to the police or masterminded their arrest by the police. The police is also accused of revealing the identity of their informants to the suspected criminals after being released by the police in questionable circumstances who later go after the informants. Also, the police has on many occasions failed to redeem the price tag it puts on suspected criminals at large. The police has been accused of bribery and corruption, extortion of motorists, illegal road blocks, extra-judicial killings, intimidation and the use of excessive force on innocent citizens, giving arms to armed robbers, involvement in the armed robbery, mass and illegal arrest, unable to confront the armed robbers, etc. The police officers are sometimes use as private body guards and thugs by rich politicians and plays an ignoble role in election violence. All these perceptions of the people of the police disconnected them from the police.

The perceptions of the people of the police worsened to the extent that community members perceived as police informants are derided. Under this state of affairs, many Nigerian communities no longer looked to the Nigerian Police Force for their protection from violent criminals or from other sources of danger. Instead they have resorted to other means like self-defense or mob action for their own protection including unregulated and often violent reprisals against suspected sources of their collective endangerment⁴².

The increased incidence of crime since the end of the military regime has resulted to the proliferation of heavily armed vigilante groups in nearly every corners of Nigeria. Owing to erosion of confidence of the police by the people and mutual mistrust or distrust between the police and emerging vigilante security apparatus, the vigilante stopped handing over suspected criminals to the police and instead began to carry out extra-judicial executions and killings of suspected criminals⁴³.

The point being made is that it was the discontent between the police and the community that resulted to the emergence of the vigilante security in Nigeria.

Vigilante, Community Policing and Security Challenges in Nigeria

Owing to the failure or inability of the Nigeria Police Force to tackle the security challenges confronting the country, some state governments began to help form, endorse and sponsor vigilante groups. The state in Nigeria unlike other federations like United States of America, are not constitutionally empowered to have their own police. Thus, there is only one federal police for the whole of the country⁴⁴ making it very difficult if not impossible for the Nigerian police to effectively police or secure over 150 million people with diverse culture,

religion and language in a geographical area of 913,075 square kilometres unevenly distributed.

The total number of policemen in Nigeria in 2006 is 315,588 policemen⁴⁵ policing over 150 million people, that is, approximately one policeman for 475 persons in Nigeria, each covering approximately 2.89 square kilometers on the average. Out of these 315,588 policemen in 2006 only 269,164 policemen are rank and files⁴⁶, greater number of which should have been on patrol and on the streets, while the rest should be in offices. But alas of the 269,164 policemen in rank and files in Nigeria Police Force (NPF), greater percentage of them are bodyguards to politicians, rich people, banks and other financial institutions.

The total number of area commands, divisions, police stations, police posts and village posts in Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in 2006 are 126, 1,040, 1,598, 2,631, and 3,924, respectively⁴⁷.

This means in a country where there are over 150,000 communities and over two million villages, many communities and villages do not have police posts and village posts. From the foregoing, it becomes impossible for the police to effectively police the length and breadth of Nigeria let alone implement effective community policing. The bottom line is that Nigeria lacks the police officers and police patrols often find themselves fighting against heavily armed robbers who have killed dozen of police officers. The rise in crime and insecurity and sense of low performances by the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) led to the expansion and proliferation of vigilante groups at local and state levels⁴⁸ in the Yoruba-speaking South-West by the O'odua People's Congress (OPC), in the Igbo speaking South-East by the Bakassi, and in most of the Northern states by Sharia implementation committees (Hisbah)⁴⁹.

Vigilante groups in the South-East claim to exist exclusively to take on crime, for examples, the state-sponsored and endorsed Anambra State Vigilante Service (AVS), Abia State Vigilante Service and Imo State Vigilante Service (IVS). There are also vigilante groups operating in Ebonyi State and Enugu State. A bill establishing a vigilante group in Edo State was tabled at the Edo State Assembly in August 2001. The Governor of Ebonyi State announced publicly on June 10, 2002 that he would soon sign into law the bill passed by the State house of Assembly establishing the vigilant group⁵⁰. All these show the yearning of the states in Nigeria to have their own law enforcement security apparatus in the face of inability of the federal police, that is, Nigeria Police Force (NPF) to effectively secure their territory. For example, a bill aimed at officially sanctioning the vigilante group was introduced to the Anambra State House of Assembly in August 2000. The bill became the Anambra State Vigilante Service (AVS) Act No. 9, 2000 after the government signed it into law on December 6, 2000, becoming the first and up till date the only armed vigilante group officially recognized by a state government in Nigeria.

The members of the AVS are paid by the Anambra State government through the taxpayers' money or public fund, and act under strict supervision from the authorities of the Anambra State government. In some cases in the Southeastern states in Nigeria, communities and neighbourhood contributed money to procure services of the vigilante groups to secure the neighbourhood or community at times in counterpart funding with the state government. Although, the AVS Act expressly states that the vigilante group should not be armed and must hand over every suspect it arrests straight over to the police, the AVS had repeatedly been accused of carrying out extrajudicial executions of suspected criminals and also political opponents of the state government⁵¹. This made the AVS and the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) to clash.

In August and September 2002, the police carried out a series of raids the armed vigilante groups in the Southeast, mainly in Abia State and Anambra State arresting at least

one hundred vigilante members and releasing scores of illegally held detainees. For instance, precisely on September 24, 2002, mobile police officers attacked the premises of Anambra State Vigilante Service (AVS) in and around Onitsha. One hundred members of the AVS were still in detention for interrogation as of October 21, 2002. The police found five illegal detention centres in Ihiala, Nnewi, Onitsha, Awka and Ekwulobia earlier on August 8, 2002, members of the mobile police (MOPOL), a special unit within the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), raided five bases of operation of the Bakassi Boys in Abia State and liberated or freed 46 prisoners held in cells by the vigilante group in these bases. During the operation, the police also arrested 33 alleged members of the Bakassi Boys⁵².

There is obviously lack of trust between the police and the vigilante groups in that while the vigilante groups accused the police of corruption by releasing suspects they handed over to them without proper investigation and prosecution, the police accused the vigilante group of indulging in extra-judicial executions and killings and illegal detention of suspected criminals without handing them over to them. For example, according to official source of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), there are no known records of the Anambra Vigilante Service (AVS) delivering those they apprehend into police custody. The police on their part have fallen short of their duties towards the Anambra State Vigilante Service (AVS). They consistently fail to arrest suspects from these armed vigilante groups and carry out investigations of the numerous alleged crimes committed by them. For example, the police simply freed the detainees in the vigilante detention centres during their raids of these illegal detention centres without further investigation of these detained suspects. The politicians and rich businessmen used these vigilante groups as they have been using police for intimidating political opponents during campaigns and elections and against their enemies, and by some rich people against their enemies in businesses and land disputes as well as against their debtors to enforce payment of loans, and even landlords against their tenants for eviction. The vigilante group members were thus used as political thugs by politicians. This was the root of the mutual distrust between the police and vigilante security apparatus and this mutual distrust or mistrust between the police and vigilante groups worsened the security challenges in Nigeria. In order to tackle, these worsening security challenges, the government and the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) embark upon the reform of the police in Nigeria reaffirming the need to introduce and implement community policing paving way to formal introduction of community policing in 2004. But before the formal launching of the community policing on April 27, 2004, the police had trained officers and men both locally and internationally, to help spread the gospel of community policing⁵³.

For example, in 2003, some police officers were sent to England courtesy of the British Department for International Development (DFID) to understudy community policing as practised in Britain. Consequently in 2004, more officers were trained as Community Development Officers (CDP) in Enugu, Southeastern Nigeria. These officers were asked to spread the message of community policing to other officers in other states of the Federation⁵⁴. Also, in Jigawa State Command, in line with this policy, the Jigawa Police Command has so far trained more than fifty of their officers on community relations⁵⁵.

The efforts of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) to involve communities in the job of policing and to make the security agency a people-friendly force has received a boost with the recent training of 53 officers at the Police College, Ikeja. The trained police officers are expected to take the community policing project to the grassroots. The participants at the six-week training programme from police constables to the rank of Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP) were drawn from 19 state commands, comprising the six pilot states and 12 other states. The purpose of the course is to train 53 field trainers and to develop and introduce community policing in the 18 states. The trained field trainers are expected to go back to their

various states to train others in order to ensure that community policing gets to the grassroots with a view to bringing about attitudinal change⁵⁶.

Community policing in Nigeria presumes that there is need for better communication and understanding between the police and the public. Therefore, community policing is more effective both in preventing offending and achieving offender detection and remediation post offence in that it encourages more liberal and tolerant attitudes towards offenders. The central theme of the Nigerian policing is that community model of policing is not only meant for uniform patrol or specific community policing units rather that the potential rewards cannot be fully realized unless there is a shared understanding of the community towards that approach throughout the police organization. Community policing therefore requires the integrated involvement of all departments and functions with their combined efforts and expertise focus on community-based actions to address local priorities⁵⁷.

Community policing in Nigeria does not replace all other policing styles, models or methods, but harness core policing function such as traffic enforcement, crime prevention and public order management. These core responsibilities or roles remain essential and are entirely compatible and complementary if they meet the performance standard and criteria demanded by the community policing⁵⁸. The crux of the community policing in Nigeria is that for members of the police force to fulfill the privileged role they perform in the society, they must be part of and not apart from the communities they serve. It was based on the importance attached to community policing in Nigeria that countries like Britain and the United States of America have spent so much to train members of the Nigeria Police Force. For example, in 2003, seven senior officers from Nigeria Police Force (NPF) went to Britain and United States of America to do a comparative study of community policing in Britain and America and when they came back drafted an action plan on community policing project for introducing Nigeria's version of community policing by adapting the best aspects of community policing in these two countries into Nigerian context⁵⁹.

The three defining features of core elements of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) philosophy of community policing include; one, that the responsibility for community safety and crime prevention is not solely that of the police, but a shared one between the police and the people; two, that policing is not simple about reacting to incidents or calls for service from the public once a crime has been committed rather it is proactively addressing local problems and small issues before they grow into bigger ones and/or crimes, that is, policing-as-a-process; and three, that community policing entails officer discretion, flexibility and freedom over how they do their jobs and respond to community needs, without the need to resort to formal rules and arrest procedures⁶⁰.

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) philosophy and strategy of community policing adopts an integrated model that captures the essence of community safety and crime prevention. It is hybrid of different policing models adapted to suit the Nigeria context such as community-oriented policing, problem-oriented policing, traditional policing and intelligence-led policing. This created a multi-faceted, but all encompassing Nigeria-specific model of community policing supported by KUSAB training, that is, training that covers knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and behaviour⁶¹.

Community policing, however is facing various problems in Nigeria. One, low level of awareness about the programme by the Nigerian police officers as well as the general public, and thus, many police officers and the general public are ignorant about the underlying philosophy of community policing. Two, the challenge of changing the perception of police officers about their primary responsibility in the society, because many of them still have the perception that their primary responsibility is to arrest, detain and interrogate a person suspected of committing a crime and to enforce law and order in the society by all

means without seeking support from any member of the society. Three, the challenge of gaining confidence, cooperation and understanding of the members of the public in that numerous studies conducted on the police-public relations in Nigeria reveal that most of the members of the society had no confidence on the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). Finally and more importantly, is the problem of implementation of community policing in Nigeria, despite the assistance of the British Council under its programme “Safety, Justice and Growth” (SJG)⁶². Some of the factors blamed as constituting a stumbling block to the proper implementation of community policing include Godfatherism, nepotism, ethnicism, corruption, institutional constraints such as inadequate manpower, insufficient education and training, inadequate equipment, and poor condition of service of the average policemen and perception of the police force itself by themselves and community they serve⁶³.

We contend, however, that greatest challenges and problems confronting community policing in Nigeria are, one, the bad state of Nigerian economy with high unemployment, poverty and poor standard of living which usually drive people to crime, and two, the value system or general erosion in moral values of and standards that encourage crime. For information on unemployment and poverty levels in Nigeria see Tables 1 and 2 below:

Table 1: Unemployment Rate in Nigeria, 2002-2008

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Unemployment	12.60	14.80	13.35	11.90	13.70	14.60	19.70

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, *Social Statistic in Nigeria*, 2009.

Table 2: Trade in Poverty Levels in Nigeria, 1980-2004

Year	Poverty incidence (%)	Estimated total population	Population in poverty
1980	28.1	65 million	18.26 million
1985	46.3	75 million	34.73 million
1992	42.7	91.5 million	39.07 million
1996	65.6	102.3 million	67.11 million
2004	54.4	126.3 million	68.70 million

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), *Poverty Portfolio for Nigeria*, 2005.

From the Tables 1 and 2 above, the unemployment rate and poverty levels rose from 12.60% in 2002 to 19.70% in 2008 and 28.1% in 1980 to 54.4% in 2004, respectively. Not surprisingly, armed robbery cases, stolen vehicles and missing persons have not reduced drastically. For details see Tables 3, 4 and 5 below for cases of armed robbery, stolen vehicles and missing persons in Nigeria.

Table 3: Total Number of Reported Armed Robbery Cases in Nigeria, 2003-2007

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Cases	2,726	2,915	3,059	2,275	2899	2506

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, *Social Statistic in Nigeria*, 2009.

Table 4: Number of Vehicles Stolen, Recovered and Not Recovered in Nigeria, 2005-2007

Year	2006	2008
Stolen	2,089	582
Recovered	1,001	187
Not recovered	1,073	395

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, *Social Statistic in Nigeria*, 2009.

Table 5: Cases of Missing Persons in Nigeria, 2002-2007

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Cases	1,902	1,223	1,316	1,080	1,374	867

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, *Social Statistic in Nigeria*, 2009.

Other security challenges currently confronting Nigeria include election and post-election violence, ethno-religious violence, communal wars, Boko Haram, Nigeria-Delta militancy and other radical ethno-regional organization or militant groups and other forms of domestic terrorism such as kidnapping in the Southeast between 2009 and 2011. The point being made is that the mutual distrust between the police and vigilante worsened the security challenges in Nigeria.

The British Example

Community policing and neighborhood watch in United Kingdom of Great British are not uniform in all the kingdoms. However, despite the diversity of community policing in Britain, it is not confronted with the challenges of ethnic militia and poor human development indices as the case with Nigeria⁶⁴. It is therefore not in vain that Nigeria is understudying British model of community policing with the hope of adapting it to its own context or cultural milieu. Already the British police has been helping training Nigeria policemen⁶⁵.

The British policing model saw its roots in private property protection by such group as the “Bow Street Runner”, where the emphasis was on the provision of the police “service” rather than a “force”. The motive for the formation of the police was to protect the private property of the section of society who was becoming wealthy as a result of the industrial revolution - the nouveau rich. Since the introduction of modern British policing in 1839, there has been a single point of recruitment, at constable level. There were few schemes with direct entry at inspector level, but these failed. One of the fundamental differences of the British policing is that all police are “officers” and all hold the “office” of constable and are individually accountable for the exercise of that office⁶⁶.

The British police officers live within the community and are not routinely armed, because of the roots of policing come from a need identified by the community. The promotion system is designed based on merit, not sorority. In Chief Police Officers are operationally independent of government control in that they are accountable to parliament, not the executive. This constitutional separation of power where the police is answerable to the parliament is the cornerstone of the British policing⁶⁷. Beginning from 1970s, the British police began to remove emphasis on investigation of crime after it had occurred by focusing police activity on the known serious criminals, using surveillance and gaining knowledge about their activities so that prosecution were more likely to succeed and that true deterrence of imprisonment was focused on these who created the greatest harm to society and their communities. This top-down pressure for more community-based policing was more than equaled by pressure from within communities themselves for more involvement in policing issues⁶⁸.

Innovations from other countries such as neighbour hood watch where concerned individuals within communities combine to look after each other’s property and interests, proliferated in the absence of local police patrol. Private security companies providing security guards, who were often low skilled, low paid and low interest, grew at a rate that caused alarm. In an effort to combat the imbalance, neighborhood policing, was trailed in London, at the behest of two Chief Police Officers, Hart and Beckett, designing a system which incorporated many of the basis of traditional policing. Geographic responsibility of junior police to a community was introduced, gathering intelligence took place together with

consultation with the community reflecting the priorities of the local community in a far more sensitive way⁶⁹.

The neighbourhood watch scheme in Britain is therefore a partnership where people come together to make their communities safer. It involves the police, community safety departments of local authorities, other voluntary organizations and above all, individuals and families who want to make their neighbourhoods better place to live. It aims to help people protect themselves and their properties and to reduce the fear of crime by means of improved home security, greater vigilance, accurate reporting of suspicious incidents to the police and by fostering a community spirit⁷⁰.

Actually, the British first neighbourhood watch was set up in Mollington in Cheshire in 1982 and many more schemes followed throughout the United Kingdom, and ten million people are now claimed to be members. The neighbourhood watch schemes are run by their members through a coordinator and are supported by the police and in many divisions by a local neighbourhood watch association. A volunteer resident coordinator supervises the scheme and liaises with the police. They receive information and message to keep them in touch with activities, and some items, which are available to members⁷¹.

It is pertinent to note that the scheme is a community initiative, which is supported by the police, not run by them, so success depends on what the members make of it. Neighbourhood watch provides a way for local people to play an important part in helping the police address the problems and issues arising from crime and anti-social behaviour thereby making their communities safer. The role of neighbourhood watch coordinator therefore is to set up and maintain a neighbourhood scheme within a specific street, neighbourhood or area. They will need to be in contact with the crime prevention coordinator at their nearest police station who will help clarify what is involved and the initial steps to take. Whilst each crime prevention coordinator may develop specific procedures, the main duties which coordinators may need to manage include; one, encourage vigilance among scheme members and actively encourage the early reporting of suspicious incidents to the police; two, receive crime information from the neighbourhood watch message system and distribute these messages to scheme members; three, welcome new comers to the neighbourhood and invite them to be part of the scheme, among other duties or tasks depending on the needs of each neighbourhood⁷².

Some larger communities appoint Area and/or Word Coordinators forming a hierarchy who sit above other coordinators are necessarily authoritative but they provide structure and cohesion for larger and more active watch schemes. In assisting other coordinators, they organize coordinators' meetings and neighbourhood meetings as well as being an extra link to the local police, and like all other coordinators these role are completely voluntary and therefore unpaid. To bring experience and maturity to neighbourhood watch, most of these senior roles are taken by people who are in their 50s, 60s and 70s. The Neighbourhood and Home Watch Network established in 2007 is funded by the Home Office. It is the official website for neighbourhood watch and the site includes news, resources and contact information⁷³.

The objectives of neighbourhood watch are, one, to prevent crime by improving security, increasing vigilance, creating and maintaining a caring community and reducing opportunities for crime by increasing crime prevention awareness; two, to assist the police in detecting crime by promoting effective communication and the prompt reporting of suspicious and criminal activity; three, to reduce undue fear of crime by providing accurate information about risks and by promoting a sense of security and community spirit, particularly among the more vulnerable members of the community; and four, to improve

police-community liaison by providing effective communications through neighbourhood watch messaging systems in a two-way traffic of communication or information⁷⁴.

Therefore, generally the principles of community policing in Britain include; one, visible police presence; two, communication and consultation with the community; three, responsiveness to community needs; four, responsiveness to individual needs and to those who may be particularly vulnerable; five, accountability to the community; six, partnering with public and private agencies; and finally, a commitment to local problem-solving⁷⁵.

Conclusion

Community policing is not foreign or new to Africa, because long before European colonialism in Africa, the traditional Igbo society, for example, already had this model in place where the age grade and masquerade society among other roles or functions performed the role of law enforcement. Every adult male citizen was a member of the age grade and masquerade society, suggesting that policing or securing was the duty of the entire society.

However, the European colonialism supplanted, for example, Igbo model of community with colonial police who alienated the people. This alienation continued in post colonial or post independence Nigeria deepening the distrust or mistrust between the people and the police. This lack of cooperation from the people has a serious consequence, which is the inability of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) to combat crime and tackle various security challenges in Nigeria leading to the proliferation of vigilante security apparatus particularly in the form of vigilante militia groups. Yet the proliferation of vigilante groups has as well exacerbated security challenges in Nigeria owing to the distrust between them and the police.

It is view of this that we suggest the British community policing as a good example or model of community policing for Nigeria. Already the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) had since 2003 sent policemen to learn and understudy the British model of community policing with the possibility of adapting it to Nigerian political context and socio-cultural milieu. Yet the prospects of community policing in Nigeria look gloomy considering the poor human development indices like poverty, mass unemployment, etc, driving people to crime.

The conclusions at which we arrived in this study are, one, that the disconnect between the police and the community, unlike in Britain, resulted in the proliferation of vigilante security apparatus in Nigeria; and two, the mutual distrust or mistrust between the police and vigilante worsened the security challenges in Nigeria.

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