

THE NIGERIA POLICE FORCE AND THE CRISIS OF LEGITIMACY: RE-DEFINING THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF THE NIGERIA POLICE

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Abstract

The objective of the paper is to examine the Nigerian Police Force as a colonial institution that has survived for several decades, in order to understand the modifications and adaptations which have occurred in its historical role and functions, especially, after indigenous personnel had replaced the expatriate ones. It is assumed that such adaptations would be able to achieve greater congruence with the values and norms of the Nigerian society. The Nigerian Police Force, surely, has experienced different leadership qualities, training and several reorganizations, including purging it of the ‘bad eggs’. But how near is the nation to a sufficiently friendly, responsive, literate, largely honest, well-equipped, numerically adequate and efficient police force that is able to sustain public confidence in any appreciable sense? The paper argues that a meaningful inquiry into the historical evolution of the role and functions of the Nigeria Police would be a helpful analytical framework with which to deal with the crisis of confidence in the Nigeria Police Force. The paper affirms that there can be a ‘good’ Nigeria Police Force which can achieve institutional significance and endear itself to the collective popular psyche.

Keywords: Nigeria, Police, Crisis, Legitimacy, Structure, Function

Introduction

The Nigeria Police Force is designated by Section 194 of the 1979 constitution as the national police of Nigeria with exclusive jurisdiction throughout the country (Wikipedia, 2013). The Nigeria Police today is faced with the crisis of legitimacy. Two overriding problems are evident. One is the significant increases in crime and violence and insecurity. The other is growing distrust for the police by the public (Alemika, 2003:19-32; Ibidapo-Obe, 2003: iii; Jike, 2003: vii). But our knowledge of the role and function of

the Nigeria Police and proposals for change have taking the form of a-historical statements which are rather superficial statement about a complex problem. The Nigeria Police is seen as an autonomous social institution unconnected with the socio-historical processes in the Nigerian society; whereas so much interest is shown in the products and consequences of police work, so little is known about how that work evolved. However, lack of knowledge has not prevented people from speculating about the subject or from making recommendations about how police work should be improved, even though those proposals are so vague and general that policemen, if they were motivated to change their behavior, would find little guidance about what they should do to meet the expectations of these ‘experts’. Consequently, unsupported inferences about the policing process have passed imperceptibly into our conceptions of the police role and function, and proposals for change have taken the form of general statements about what the police ought to be doing, which are often superficial glosses on a complex problem.

In Nigeria there seems to be a strong feeling among academics on the one hand and police administrators and policy makers, on the other hand, that the inefficiency and ineffectiveness prevalent in the Nigeria Police stem from the application of inappropriate philosophies, policies and practices (Odekunle, 1978:86-94, 1979:61-83; Tamumo, 1970, 1985; Okonkwo, 1966). The police force can only function when its members do not wittingly transgress the values and norms they are employed to uphold and protect. This might represent the most desirable starting point for an orientational restructuring of the Nigeria Police.

The Role and Functions of the Police

Government has a responsibility to protect lives, liberties and properties of its citizens, and the exercise of power by the government therefore, must be conditioned by that purpose (Locke, 1976:3; Rousseau, 1976:13). Society through its law gives its government wide powers for the purpose of efficient and effective preservation of law and order, and protection of citizens from suffering, fear and loss of life and property produced by crime and violent conflict. The police is, inherently, the most visible symbol of any government’s power and authority and the primary enforcer of its laws; an institution of social control in the hands of those who are managers of the state (World Encyclopedia, 2006; Sullivan, 2005; Das and Palmiotto, 2004; Ascoli, 1985; Robinson, Scaglione and Olivero, 1994; Suleiman, 1996).

It is problematic to define contemporary police mainly in terms of their supposed role and functions (World Encyclopedia, 2006; Klochars, 1985). The police are called upon routinely to perform a bewildering

miscellany of tasks, from traffic control to terrorism (Bittner, 1970; Potholm, 1969). The uniting feature of police work is not a particular social function, whether it is crime control, social service, order maintenance or political repression. Rather, it is that all demands on the police involve something that ought not to be happening and about which someone had better do something 'now' (Sullivan, 2005; Tamuno, 1985). The distinctiveness of the police lies in their being the specialist repositories for the state's monopolisation of legitimate force (Suleiman, 1996:9). In other words, policing tasks arise in emergency situations, usually with an element of social conflict, and for effective performance of their duties and functions they are given wide discretionary powers. This should not be construed to imply that all policing is about the use of force. On the contrary, 'good' policing has often been seen as the craft of handling trouble without resort to coercion, usually by skilled verbal tactics (Das and Palmiotto, 2004; *The African Guardian*, 1986:18-19).

Statement of the Problem

There is no time more appropriate than now, that the government is currently attempting to reform the police, to refocus our attention on the apparent dilemma the Nigeria Police faces as it struggles to disburse its statutory responsibility of law enforcement. The Nigeria Police has come a long way as an offshoot of the British imperial guard which was unequivocally committed to British colonial interests. The Nigeria Police Force is one of the institutions transplanted into the Nigerian society when it was colonised by the British, whose police are routinely referred to as role model for the world (World Encyclopedia, 2006; Sullivan, 2005; Das and Palmiotto, 2004; Bowden 1978; Mawby. 1991, 1992; Osifo-Whiskey, 1986:9). Ironically, the British bequeathed an unfriendly, punitive and repressive police model from the onset to Nigeria as in other colonial social formations (Bowden, 1987:4-14; Odekunle, 1978:86-94; Newswatch, 1986:13-20; *The Africa Guardian*, 1988:3; Okonkwo, 1966; Tamuno, 1970). The Nigeria Police Force, in fifty-three years of political independence, has seemed to show no keen desire to acquire a new mental attitude which the changed political situation ought to have demanded. The Nigeria Police has not been able to come to terms with the ramifications of social change in contemporary Nigeria. As a wholly indigenous outfit, the police force as we have come to know it has foundered in the disbursement of its duties to the state and to the people. As a consequence, people perceive and describe the police in pejorative terms (Jike, 2003: vii).

Although generally considered an attractive career, the Nigeria Police Force experiences endemic problems with recruiting, training, inefficiency, indiscipline, and lacking expertise in specialized fields. Corruption and

dishonesty are widespread, engendering a low level of public confidence, failure to report crimes, and tendencies to resort to self-help by citizens. Police are more adept at paramilitary operations and the exercise of force than at community service functions or crime prevention, detection, and investigation (Wikipedia, 2013).

The Nigeria Police Force is alleged to follow a policy of "fire for fire" in which many captured suspects die in police custody or are "shot while attempting to escape". Decades of police and official corruption and continued failure to train police officers properly has led to a situation where extrajudicial killing is an accepted form of dealing with people the police believe to be criminals. A popular case in point is Yusuf Mohammed, the leader of the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria, who was alive when captured by the police. Even before the violence surrounding the Boko Haram uprising in Northern Nigeria, there were questions over the conduct of the security forces (Wikipedia, 2013).

There is today a widespread feeling of fear and insecurity in the land. Nigerians do not feel safe anywhere: at home, at work, on the highways, at the airports and even within the hallowed precincts of places of worship. It is possible to link the unprecedented rise in violent crimes and the alarming new dimensions of organized terrorist activities to the refusal of the authorities to engage in meaningful dialogue with significant segments of the civilian population. Some Nigerians see this development as the only available option to express deep-seated frustration and anger, for violence invariably begets even further violence (UNDP, 1998).

Historical Dynamics

The evolution of the historical role and functions of the Nigeria Police Force cannot be meaningfully discussed without reference to the British Police. This is not only because of British's colonial role in Nigeria's historical and social processes but also because the "Bobby" (Police) of London is the precursors of the modern police in Nigeria and all over the world (Brogden, 1987:4-14; Mawby, 1992; Osifo-Whiskey, 1986:9; Robinson, Scaglione, and Oliver, 1994).

British Police

In popular culture cops (police) and robbers (criminals) are a conceptual couple, the former perennially chasing the latter (Reiner, 1977). But it was the late 18th and early 19th centuries that there began a vigorous branch of political economy known as "the science of police" (Reiner, 1988:138-158). This saw as its problem the understanding of crime and disorder and development of appropriate policies for their control. Thus, the first professional police force in Great Britain, the 1800 Thames River police

was created (Reiner, 1997). However, police in the modern meaning of people in uniform figured only a relatively small part of this project. The term ‘police’ was used then in a much broader sense to connote the whole craft of governing a social order by economic, social and cultural policy (Rawlings, 1995:129-149). The police in our contemporary sense were seen as merely a small part of a whole business of domestic government and regulation, all of which were relevant for the understanding and control of crime and disorder.

British Police ideology rested upon the idea of a fundamental distinction between its model of community-based policing and an alien “continental” state controlled system (Mawby, 1992). Conventional history of the British police attempts to trace a direct lineage between the ancient tribal forms of collective self-policing and contemporary “bobby”. The consequence of this populist pedigree is supposedly a uniquely popular police force (Reith, 1956).

Nigeria Police

Historically, Nigeria came into being in its present form as a British colonial creation. Through colonialism and domination, on the one hand, and on the other hand, by neo-colonialism and diffusion, Nigeria’s social, economic and political processes and institutions were reorganised and integrated into the world capitalist system (Odekunle, 1978:86-94). It is in the light of this historical reality that we can better situate the role and functions of the Nigeria Police, and also to deal with the police crisis of legitimacy in Nigeria.

What is today known as the Nigeria Police Force is the brainchild of British colonial government and dates back to 1861, following the annexation of Lagos (Tamuno, 1978; Newswatch, 1986:13-20; Okonkwo, 1966). The British Consul charged with the administration of Lagos established a Consular Guard in Lagos by the Police Act of 1861 to help maintain law and order. In 1863, the 30-member Consular Guard was renamed Hausa Guard, so-named after the ethnicity of the men recruited into the unit. It was further regularised in 1879 by an ordinance creating a ‘constabulary’ for the colony of Lagos. Thus, the Hausa Guard became known as Hausa Constabulary. The constabulary was mainly military in character, though it performed some police (civil) duties. An Inspector-General of Police commanded this Force recruited mainly from Hausas and known as the "Hausa Constabulary".

On 1st January 1896, the Lagos Police Force was created and armed like the "Hausa Constabulary". While the developments were taking place in Lagos and part of the Yoruba heartland, the geo-political area now known as south-south, which includes the states of Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River,

Delta, Edo and Rivers states were declared the Oil Rivers Protectorate in 1891 with Headquarters at Calabar where an armed constabulary was formed.

In 1893 the area was proclaimed the Niger Coast, and a constabulary modeled on the Hausa Constabulary was formed. It existed for six years and featured prominently in the British expedition to Benin in 1896. In the Northern parts of the Country, the Royal Niger Company which was granted a Royal Charter in 1886 by the British government set up the Royal Niger Constabulary in 1888 with Headquarters at Lokoja to protect its installations along the banks of the River Niger.

The Royal Niger Constabulary played an important role in British campaigns against Bida and Ilorin. When the British government in 1900, following the transfer of administration from the Royal Niger Company proclaimed Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria, the Royal Niger Constabulary was split into the Northern Nigeria Police Force and the Northern Nigeria Regiment. In the South, the Lagos Police Force and part of the Niger Coast Constabulary became the Southern Nigeria Police Force in 1906, while the bulk of the Niger Coast Constabulary formed the Southern Nigeria Regiments.

The new police forces were, in addition to normal civil police duties, responsible for dealing with internal disturbance and external aggression. But the police forces operated separately, even after the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914, until 1930 when they were merged to form the present Nigeria Police Force with Headquarter in Lagos. During the colonial period, most police were associated with local governments (native authorities). In the 1960s, under the First Republic, these forces were first regionalised and then nationalised. In 1943 the Northern and the Western regions of Nigeria established their own regional police. There existed also local government police (or native authority police). These were all merged into the Nigeria Police Force in 1968 (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2000). The Nigeria Police Force performed conventional police functions and was responsible for internal security generally. Successive Nigerian Constitutions since 1979 have provided for the existence of the Nigeria Police Force alone as the national police of Nigeria with exclusive jurisdiction throughout the country (Wikipedia, 2013).

Crisis of Legitimacy

The history and dynamics of the development of the Nigeria Police Force in the country indicate that the various police forces were established, organised and maintained by colonial and post-colonial governments largely for the protection of the interests of political and economic power-holders.

As a result, policing in the country had been characterized by a culture of impunity, corruption, incivility, brutality, lack of accountability. The lesson, therefore, from this history and dynamics is that Nigeria police presently face a three-fold crisis and challenge of performance, integrity and legitimacy (Alemika, 2003: 26-29; Ibidapo-Obe, 2003: iii).

Nigeria police performance is unsatisfactory; the police are ineffective and inefficient in their job of crime prevention, criminal investigation, and response to distress calls by citizens. The poor performance is due to several factors, but mainly to lack of development of productive and social infrastructure in society; inappropriate policing strategies; inadequate intelligence gathering, analysis and utilisation skills and facilities, inadequacy of officers in terms of quality and training at various ranks; poor training and conditions of service; lack of public co-operation; grossly inadequate logistics (especially transportation, telecommunication, arms and ammunition, etc.); poor remuneration and lack of motivation by the force and superior officers. The challenge is that an ineffective police force cannot guarantee the security of citizens and as a result of this failure, cannot command the respect of the public (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2000; Odekunle, 1979; Adeyemi, 2001; Ididapo-Obe, 1995; Nwankwo et al; 1993).

The integrity of the police in the country has been eroded by widespread corruption and brutality among them. As a result of its colonial history and protracted rule, the Nigeria Police has not developed the culture of accountability to the public or citizens. The Nigeria police is characterised by brutality, corruption, extortion, incivility, extra-judicial killings and impunity (Tamuno, 1970; Okowkwo, 1966; Working Party Report, 1966; Alemika, 1993). Ibidapo-Obe (1995) and Adeyemi (2001) reported that police brutality and corruption are common in the course of crime control, crowd control management of protests and demonstrations, investigations, and at checkpoints. They noted also that police brutality occurs in the form of extra-judicial killings, summary execution of suspects, and revenge killings. During criminal investigation and interrogation, due to a combination of poor training, inadequate infrastructure, and absence of respect for due-process and human rights, police resort to torture to extract confession and information. Torture methods used by the Nigeria police include beating with sticks, iron bars, wires and cables. Other torture methods include sticking pins or sharp objects into the penis of suspects, shooting of suspects on the limbs, use of cigarette light to inflict burns on suspects (Nwankwo et al., 1993).

As a consequence of the two challenges of performance and integrity, the Nigeria police is confronted with legitimacy crisis. The

legitimacy of the police depends on several factors including the following: Effectiveness and efficiency in the prevention and control of crime; in the detection, apprehension and prosecution of offenders; scrupulous observance of the rule of law; recognition and protection of the dignity and right of citizens; accountability to the citizens; civility and incorruptibility; and concern for the general welfare of citizens. When these conditions are satisfied, the public accords the police legitimacy and support, and their performance is enhanced. But the forces and factors that create and sustain these pre-conditions for public support are beyond the police. Such factors include democratic and good governance, good and responsive laws, economic and technological development, a deeply ingrained socio-cultural values of justice and equity, compassion, and political tolerance. In Nigeria, these conditions are largely absent. Consequently, the Nigeria police suffer deficit of public legitimation and support; the public do not respect, trust and support the police because their performance is poor. Also, the public regards the character and level of accountability of the police as grossly unsatisfactory. The police in the nation are generally feared but not respected, distrusted and despised by the Nigerian public (Alemika, 1988, 2003:19-32; Ibidapo-Obe, 2003: iii). The police needs to resolve the problems of ineffectiveness, corruption and brutality; without doing so, it cannot enjoy public legitimacy – acceptance, respect and support (Alemika, 2003: 26-29).

Theoretical framework

The title of the paper readily suggests the basic functional model of a society as equilibrium tending toward stability but reacting to changes by adjusting so as to restore the equilibrium. This theoretical orientation in sociological analysis looks at society as a complex-whole social organisation of parts that function to fulfill the functional prerequisites and promote the ends of the society. To the functionalists, all ongoing societies require an essentials order, balance coherence and stability for minimum degree of integration. And a society will remain functional, that is, maintain its order and balance, if certain conditions are met. One such condition is that sufficient proportion of the needs of the populations must be fulfilled. The other, is that a sufficient proportion of the population participate in maintaining the system. This participation requires that the institutions and the people in society consistently believe in and follow the society's shared values and norms. Social stability will be disrupted if the shared cultural values and norms are rejected by significant part of the population (Parsons, 1952:26-36).

The functionalist theory is suited for explaining gradual, long-term change and change applying to society as a whole than in accounting for the

more sudden or radical change where conflict often plays an obvious part. British colonialism provides a major exogenous factor which conditions the police institution in modern Nigerian society. The police institution, like other institutions, was externally imposed, and severe limitation was set on the freedom of the recipient society to accept or to reject the innovation. The situation is especially so when the imposition is in place for a long time and colonised people do not arrive at any strategy for dislocating the imposed institution.

Nevertheless, a process of adaptation was from the onset set in motion. Invariably, both the institution and the society into which it has been imposed must adjust to each other until some set of equilibrium is attained. At equilibrium the efficiency and effectiveness of the transplanted institution is at a maximum. However, equilibrium is not static but dynamic, and at any point in time, there is always pressure to bring about a new equilibrium position. In the final analysis, equilibrium may be measured by the degree of satisfaction of members of the society with the transplanted institution's services.

Analysis of Historical Data

Three important historical issues are relevant to the understanding of the development of police role and function, and police-public relations in Nigeria. First, colonial conquest of Nigerian nationalities took place piecemeal over a long period (1861 - 1903). Nigeria's constituent nationalities were conquered at different period. As a nationality is conquered a British colonial presence is secured by establishing a police force for the territory (Tamuno, 1970; Alemika, 1993b; Shirley, 1948). Second, violence and fraud were employed in the conquest of the nationalities. For this purpose police forces under various names were established and employed as instrument of violence and oppression against the indigenous population. Third, given the character of colonial rule, police forces were the instrument used to sustain alien domination. In all these, police were not accountable to the colonised, but to the colonisers. During colonial rule, the excesses of the police against community were not controlled; hence colonial police forces behaved as "army of occupation", killing and looting. As a result of these three features of colonialism, the police behaved as an occupation force. Consequently, the people saw and still see police as an alien force; as instrument of violence and subjugation; as extortionists and mongers of bad news and trouble (Tamuno, 1970; Onoge, 1993; Alemika, 1993b; Alemika and Chukwuma, 2000; Ibidapo-Obe 1995; Nwankwo et al, 1993; Ahire, 1991).

The circumstances under which the colonial police institution was introduced into the Nigerian society and its mode of operation over the years

lead one to conclude that the basic norms and values upon which the police institution was established in Nigeria may not be congruent with the cultural values and norms of the Nigerian society. It is usually not believed that the Nigeria Police would be fair in the administration of the law. They are generally seen as agents of domination, corrupt and unnecessarily brutal in the enforcement of the law. Consequently, members of the public do not trust and cooperate with the police to ensure that criminals are arrested and prosecuted (Odekunle, 1979; Okonkwo, 1966; Suleiman, 1996:9; Tamuno, 1985).

Many authorities have argued that the Nigeria Police is an exogenous invention by the British and has not actually shed its colonial nomenclature and repressive orientation both in the content of educational curriculum and in the actual disbursement of its duties of maintaining law and order. It is rather anachronistic, fifty-three years after independence, to have an indigenous police force that behaves like a colonial force. There ought to be a change in a more socially desirable direction.

The crises over the maintenance of law and order and security of life and property are ultimately about the continuance of governability (Bowden, 1978; Tamuno, 1970; Robinson, Scaglione and Olivero, 1994). The dilemma of both the government and the police, however, is that while the law and order, and security are collective good, too much law and order and security impinge up citizens' liberty. Inevitably, the police cannot in good conscience be credited with absolute impartiality, and consequently, the police cannot retain popular confidence.

The organisation and training of police personnel in Nigeria are focused almost entirely on apprehension and prosecution of criminals. The peace-keeping and service activities which should consume most of the police time receive little attention (Odekunle, 1979:61-83; Tamuno, 1970). An observation of the inadequacies of police training in United States of America also hold true for Nigeria; it can also be said of police training school that the recruit is taught everything except the essential requirement of his calling, which is, how to secure and maintain approval and respect of the public whom he encounters daily in the cause of his duties (Reith, 1952:115-166).

In practice, however, the role of the Police, and the expectations attached to this role have been truncated. The gamekeeper has turned poacher. The Police have become the foremost violator of the very laws they are employed to protect. Corruption is rife. Extra-judicial killings go on by the day either in the guise of accidental discharge or trumped up rationale of armed robbery or kidnapping suspect. Confidence in the police has generally eroded. Victims of crime do not trust the police enough to make a formal report at the station (Ibidapo-Obe, 2003: iii). The mutual hostility between

the police and the public in Nigeria is intense. The Police believe that they are misrepresented and mistreated by members of the public. On the other hand, the public distrusts the police, which they see as ineffective, corrupt, insensitive and callous. The nature of police-public relation in the country resulted from the colonial development of the forces as well as post-colonial governmental repression under successive military and civilian governments (Kayode, 1976; Odekunle, 1979; Alemika, 1993b; Alemika and Chukwuma, 2000; 2001; Working Party Report, 1966; Okonkwo, 1966).

Redefining the Nigeria Police

The controversy between those who believe in the universality of the police role and function, and those who affirm that the police are culture-bound is far from being settled (Brodgen, 1987:4-14; Mawby, 1992; Potholm, 1969:141). It is no doubt that a country cannot do without a police force; the police plays a preponderant role to protect and safeguard the security of life and property, and maintain law and order within the internal territorial boundaries of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. But what kind of Police do Nigerians need?

Ibidapo-Obe (2003:iii) argues that the question is fundamental because in terms of cultural chronology, it is the society that creates the police not the other way round. The Police hinges its sustenance and continuity on the harmonious and resilient social values and norms which together constitute the normative order. The Police is actually appointed and expected by society to maintain this normative standard. In other words, the Police is expected to enforce conformity to the tolerable range of acceptable behaviour while cases of deviance or nonconformity are duly arrested to face the law.

As it is the British, the Nigerian Police ideology should rest upon the idea of a fundamental distinction between its model of traditional- or community-based policing and an alien nationally controlled system (Mawby, 1992). Conventional history of the Nigeria police should attempt to trace a direct lineage between the ancient traditional forms of collective self-policing and contemporary policing system. The consequence of this populist pedigree would be a uniquely popular police force (Reith, 1956). The Nigeria Police should be organised in such a way that there is a high degree of decentralization. Each state, local area or community should have its own, apart from the national police. Moreover, as in Britain at the time of the Anglo-Saxons as it is even today, every member of the community is expected to keep the law himself and see that the law is not violated by others (Sullivan, 1971). Every member of the community is therefore a policeman. The norm would have been established that the policeman

expects and gets cooperation from members of the community in the process of enforcing the law. On the other hand, the community expects and knows that the policeman will ensure safety of life and property, and that justice will be done to all concerned. Violations of these norms are seen by both parties as an assault on the very foundation of society's value of integration. Thus, much of the efficiency and effectiveness of the British Police resulting in good cooperation by the British public would be replicated in Nigeria (Reith, 1956; Bowden, 1978).

The British attempted to replicate a similar decentralized police organisation in Nigeria by providing for regional, local or native authority police with responsibility for the police duties in their area of jurisdiction (Tamuno, 1970; Alemika and Chukwuma, 2000). However, with the emergence of self-government in the 1950s, the problem of decentralization of authority in the Nigeria Police became a major issue (Tamuno, 1970). The issue revolved around whether authority in the Nigeria Police should be decentralized or centralized. There was great apprehension, especially among the minority ethnic groups about the power of the regional government and their control of all instruments of coercion. The minority ethnic groups preferred that the Nigeria Police should be controlled at the center by the Inspector-General of Police so as to provide them with some sense of security. In the constitutional conferences which preceded independence, it was agreed as a compromise that there should be a unified police force under an inspector-general of police who should be responsible directly to the governor-general. Therefore, since independence there has been clear reversal of policy on the control of the Nigeria Police Force. Whereas the institution was decentralized during the colonial era, as in Britain, every opportunity has been taken toward centralization since independence (Alemika and chukwuma, 2000). However, the policy of centralization is obviously a delicate arrangement. It has potential for a breakdown of law and order; the ability of the police to combat crime has not been greatly improved; it has led to delays in the administration of justice; as well as, creating community-relations and legitimation problems.

Conclusion and Recommendation

While the police perform similar function in Britain and Nigeria, and indeed, all over the world, their role and functions differ markedly from one society to another. The historical and social context of Nigeria is perhaps not the most auspicious for effective role and functional performance of the present police system. The burdens of detection, prevention and control of crime, as well as, maintenance of law and order remain almost exclusively with the police. The institution does not normally receive cooperation from members of the public in the performance of its duties.

To achieve an acceptable level of efficiency and effectiveness, and satisfaction of the community with the role and functions of the Nigeria Police, it is recommended that both Nigeria Police and Nigerian public adjust to each other until some sort of equilibrium is attained. Equilibrium may be measured ultimately by the degree of satisfaction of the members of the society with the police.

One of the strategy by which an institution may adapt to its social and cultural environment is through the education and training of its members to appreciate and respect the values of members of the community it serves. There is the dire need therefore, for a more systematic education and training programme to change the orientation of police personnel from that of a colonial police to one that should emphasise breadth of knowledge of the norms and values, and aspirations of the Nigerian society through courses in sociology, political science, ethics and history.

Nigeria currently has no civilian agency responsible for receiving and treating complaints of misconduct against the police. Consequently, the public believes that complaints against police are not adequately, properly and promptly treated or addressed. As a matter of fact, most citizens who wish to institute complaints have no effective access. These problems are largely responsible for the low public respect for the police. The challenge posed by these conditions is the need to ensure democratic accountability in public institutions in general and the police force in particular. As a challenge for the police, the officers need to be properly trained and oriented to the value of democratic accountability, respect for human rights, observance of the rule of law, civility and public assistance. In addition, erring officers should be promptly and fairly dealt with as deterrence to the officer and his/her colleagues.

Similarly, a systematic education programme on civic rights and responsibilities for the Nigerian community is needed to enhance the political process of re-defining the role and functions, and structure of the Nigeria police.

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