

## The Nigerian Police Force and the Task of Policing Democratic Nigeria: Issues and Problems

Lere Amusan<sup>1</sup> and Luqman Saka<sup>2</sup>

*Department of Politics and International Relations, North-West University,  
Mafikeng Campus, South Africa*  
*E-mail: <sup>1</sup><Lereamusan@nwu.ac.za>, <sup>2</sup><owolabisaka@gmail.com>*

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**ABSTRACT** States established Police Institution to fulfil the core responsibility of security provision. Being the agency mandated to enforce law, the police is empowered to use force in discharging its duties. In a bid to minimise abuse, national constitutions, international conventions, police codes, oversight institutions and other institutional and structural mechanisms are deployed to regulate the conduct of national police. This notwithstanding, instances of power abuse within national police, especially in developing states remains a challenge. Recognising the security threat that police abuse poses to Nigerians, this study examines the crisis of policing in Nigeria under democratic rule. The study is anchored on the political economy explanation. The study adopts qualitative method and use secondary data sourced from Nigerian newspapers, journals, books, chapter in books, reports and other material sources from the internet. Deploying these data, the study discussed brutality, extortion and violence by personnel of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF). The study recommends sweeping reforms that are directed at decentralising the management of the force, instituting credible and effective internal and external oversight of the force, training, enlightenment campaigns and improve funding for the institution.

### INTRODUCTION

The issue of security remains paramount to all human societies. This is as a result of the important position that security and safety occupies in the order of priority for individuals, groups, nations and states. The capacity to ensure survival remains the most important issue for human collectivities since it is not possible to engage in any meaningful human activity unless the safety of life is assured (Imobighe 1999: 40). It is in view of the centrality of security to human existence that Thomas Hobbes in his treatise “The Leviathan” justifies the necessity for an absolute government in his native England. Hobbes argument was that a strong government is needed to ensure safety of life, which will be endangered in a state of nature that lacks any government which can provide law and order. Therefore, the political community that emerged from the contract entered into by individuals according to the ‘Social Contract Theorists’ has the sole purpose of guaranteeing safety of life and property of individuals and groups within it.

Since the inception of the modern state system traceable to the Westphalian Treaty of 1648, provision of security has remained its core re-

sponsibility. It is an issue which states irrespective of their size and strength have come to take as highly important to their continued existence. In order to fulfil this core mandate the state established among others, “Police Institution”, invests it with coercive power and delegated to this body of armed men the power for upholding law and order. Being the state agency invested with the duty of providing security, the police is empowered to use force in the discharge of its duties. In order to minimize the abuse of power, national constitutions, international conventions, police orders and professional ethics are put in place to moderate the deployment of violence by national policing institutions. Notwithstanding the checks, police forces in many states sometimes deploy violence beyond permissible bounds (Alemika and Chukwuma 2004: 1). This notwithstanding, the police continue to remain central to the State in its bids to ensure survival and guarantee individual and group safety irrespective of the noticeable excesses of this important institution across countries around the world.

Though democratically elected, political leaders rather than military juntas, now makes the laws that govern most states in Africa, these laws hardly enjoy consistent enforcement. Much

of the inconsistencies that characterized law enforcement in Africa have to do, with the limited resources available for policing, poor training and supervision of police personnel. Thus, large swathes of territories and communities in Africa, particularly the peripherals of the states, seldom enjoy rule of law. Because of weakness of state in the provision of security, crime and insurgency are common in many Africa states, which are seen by students of security studies as a serious problem confronting states on the continent (Baker 2002: 3; Callaghy 1994). It is the understanding of the limitations of policing institutions, the crisis of brutality and endemic corruption within the ranks of policing authority in Africa and challenges confronting Africa states as it relates to security provisioning that informed this study.

The study is divided into eight sections. The section that follows this introduction discusses the general and specific objectives that underpinned the study. This was followed by the section on methodology. Coming after this was a brief discussion on the origin of NPF and the genesis of its teething problems. Then comes a brief review on police, police violence and corruption. This section was followed by section on results and discussion wherein the issue of police brutality, extortion and other corrupt acts were x-ray. The section after this highlight in brief efforts by police authority in Nigeria at sanitizing and redeeming the image of the NPF and then the conclusion to the paper.

### Study Objective

Across much states on the continent, there are daily reports of violent urban crimes, highway robberies, widespread banditry and increasing lawlessness (CDD and PARE 2016; Ibekwe 2016; Aziken 2010). Aside these, some states are battling with civil wars, rebellions, secessionist groups and militias' violence (Baker 2002). All these means that insecurity of life and property remain major problems confronting States in Africa. Much as rights abuse that arise from the activities of rebels, insurgents, militias, and criminal gangs are unacceptable, the abuse of citizens by agents of State institutions established to protect people, uphold law and order and funded by tax-payers money is more abhorrent. To this end, the issue of citizen's abuse at the hand of state security agencies notably personnel of

policing authority remains critical issues of public discourse across countries in Africa. Specifically as it relates to the Nigerian situation, citizen abuse, extortion and other unwholesome behaviour by ranks and file of the Nigerian Police Force remains a critical issues in public discourse since the return to civil rule in May 1999. While popular perception was that with the return to democratic rule abuse by personnel of security agencies will abate. However, this has not materialized as citizen abuse in the hand of personnel of state security agencies continue unabated. This is particularly so as it relates to instances of extortion, brutality and extra-judicial killing by Men of NPF. It is to this end that this study examines the challenges of policing in democratic Nigeria. In specific term the study:

- a. Examines the crisis of police brutality on citizen,
- b. Analyse the problem of extortion and other forms of corrupt practices associated with Men of NPF, and
- c. Discusses modalities deployed by Authority of NPF to stem the scourge of police abuse, corruption within the force and thus improve on the image of the institution.

### METHODOLOGY

The study adopts qualitative approach in the collection and analysis of data. It adopts the uses of secondary data such as newspapers articles, commentaries, opinion pieces and editorials published in Nigeria newspapers and news-magazine. This is complemented by information sourced from published journal articles, books and chapters in books. It also utilized information from reports of international civil society organizations notably the Human Rights Watch, Open Society Initiative and Amnesty International. The study also sourced information from reports of national civil society organizations such as the Centre for Law Enforcement Education, CLEEN; Civil Liberties Organization, CLO and the Network on Police Reform in Nigeria, NOPRIN. Reports of commissions set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria to look into issues of right abuse notably, the Human Rights Violation Investigation Commission (*Opota Panel*), 2002 and the Presidential Committee on the Reform of NPF (*Yusuf Committee Report*), 2008 were also utilized by the study. The study also makes use of texts of the 1999 Constitution of

the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the 1990 Police Act. The study then adopts the thematic and content analysis of the information elicited from these sources to weave its narration on the problem of police brutality, abuse of authority, extortion and other forms of corrupt practices that pervades the operation of the Nigeria Police Force. It highlights efforts of the authority of NPF directed at managing the crisis and revamping the damaged image of the force in the eye of the Nigeria public.

### **NPF: Its Origin and Genesis of Corrupt Acts and Violence**

Before the advent of the British domination of modern Nigeria starting from the annexation of Lagos in 1861, African policing approaches anchored on the community and linked with religious and social structure. At this period, the enforcement of traditional belief and customs, and the upholding of societal law and order was the function of communal structures like the age grade and vocational guilds. Through this diffuse system, law and order was upheld without recourse to violence (Ibidapo-Obe 1995; Tamuno 1970). The onset of the British colonisation and the piecemeal pacification of territories heralded the establishment of formal police force, the first been the Lagos Constabulary in the colony of Lagos. Thereafter, constabularies were established in the then Northern and Southern protectorates in colonial Nigeria.

It is important to reiterate that the colonial police force was basically established to protect and advance colonial interest. Thus in many communities, the colonial police force were employed in the pacification of communities and to suppress resistance to colonial rule (Alemika 1988; Tamuno 1970). The deployment of force and repression coupled with the acts of looting and free booting by the colonial police force marked the beginning of dissonance between the police and colonial communities, which has remained a defining feature of police and policing in modern Nigeria.

Basically three factors accounted for the development and character of the police force and conditioned police-community relation in Nigeria. These three historical factors are that the present day NPF was a colonial creation. Aside this, the police was used in the pacification of communities by the colonial authority.

These pacification processes was not peaceful, rather it was a process marked by the use of force, repression and brutal practice and tactics. And lastly, given the character of colonial rule, the police was maximally used as an instrument to enforce alien rule, domination and exploitation (Alemika and Chukwuma 2004: 8).

The significance of these factors according to Alemika and Chukwuma (2004) is that under colonial rule, the police gives account only to the colonial authority and their misdeeds and rights violations against the colonized were not moderated nor frowned at. Thus, the lacked of control and the condoning of the bad practices of the police by the colonial authority, turned the colonial police in Nigeria to an army of occupation. The conducts of the colonial police made the colonized to perceive the institution as an enemy force, instrument of subjugation and men of the force as extortionists and bullies. These perceptions were rooted in people's experiences regarding the use of the police in the early phase of colonial campaign. The use of the force to suppress uprising such as the *Aba Women Riot* of 1929 and other tax revolts, the suppression of workers' strikes in the later stage of colonial rule, and the use of the police to suppress communal uprising particularly in Tiv land, 1959-1960 (Anifowose 1982; Johnson 1982: 150; Mtera et al. 2012: 163-188; Tamuno 1970).

It is important to highlight that the orientation of colonial policing and preoccupations order continued to be the hallmark of policing in postcolonial Nigeria. Alemika (1988) notes that formal independence notwithstanding, the socio-economic conditions of exploitation, oppression, flagrant abuse of power that characterised colonial policing policies subsist. In essence, while police brutality was meted out to the nationalists by colonial authority using the police, same brutality was directed at political oppositions by post-colonial regimes using the instrumentality of the police force. The ruling elites in the First Republic (1960-1966) both national and in the regions utilised the police to suppress opposition politicians and their supporters (Ahire 1993). The use of the police for political repression did not end with the collapse of the First Republic, subsequent regimes have also utilised the police to suppress and harass both real and perceived enemies of subsisting regimes. Indeed, the deployment of the police to enforce authoritarian rule by the nation's past

military rulers entrenched the culture of violence and inhibit the development of democratic policing anchored on the rule of law (Human Rights Watch 2005: 10; FRN 2002). Rather than abating violence, brutality and extortion continue to manifest in the operations and conducts of the Nigerian Police even after the return of the country to democratic rule in 1999.

### **Criminality, Policing and Police Violence in Nigeria: A Review**

Experiences in much of the states in Africa have shown that the National Police Force remains largely ineffective and highly inefficient in combating criminals and stemming the tide of crimes. This is due to a number of factors prominent among, which are the issue of resource deprivation; poor salaries and emolument; inadequate kits, weapons and equipment; lack of motivation; poor leadership; corruption within the high echelon of the force; and the general neglect of the police by state political leadership (Onyeozili 2005: 40-44). All of these constrained the police and reduce the forces capability to stem the tide of crimes in most states on the continent. These have made the police to be viewed by the people as an ineffective institution that has failed to discharge to the fullest, its responsibilities for which it is created.

Though the lawlessness that now pervade much of the states in Africa is monumental it has gingered unlawful responses from citizen and the state security institutions. Left without adequate and effective protection of the police and the state security forces, the people have resorted to their own methods of maintaining order, preserving life, securing property and punishing those that threaten community peace and tranquillity. This response has been in the form of establishment of vigilante, anti-crimes groups and ethnic militias. The activities and operations of these communal inspired groups have been marred by reported cases of rights violations, extra-judicial killings and various abuses as was the case with the '*Sungusungu*' in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, the '*Bakassi Boys*' and '*Odua People's Congress*' in Nigeria (Baker 2002; Human Rights Watch 2003).

Unlawful responses are not confined to citizen's response groups alone, the coercive forces of the state are also implicated on the issue of lawless responses to crimes and criminality.

Under pressure from government to combat the rising wave of crime and given the limited resources available to state security agencies, particularly the police, the temptation has been for them to jettison lawful procedures as cumbersome and restrictive, and therefore resort to unlawful methods like torture, harassment, assault and extra judicial killings, which are threats to the security of the people. The inability of the National Police Forces and the States in Africa to provide adequate security for the people and citizens resort to self-help through communal vigilante groups. This has generated a vicious circle of violence and abuse of rights.

While the sustenance of any human society is anchored on efficient and effective law enforcement process and institutions (Obasanjo and Mabogunje 1992: 27), this cannot be said to be true in Nigeria as crime and criminality remains endemic (Onyeozili 2005: 44). Many people have lost their life to armed robbers and many lives are still been lost due to robberies activities by armed robbers in most commercial and major cities in Nigeria. Aside this, major highways linking constituents' states and communities have become safe haven for robbers who terrorize road users. Important commercial and business concern, particularly commercial Banks, are also facing increase threats of robbery attacks (Ibemere and Onofurho 2011; *This Day* 2008).

Much of the blame for the rise in crime and criminality in Nigeria is attributed to the failure of the policing institution. Many people accused the Police of been ineffective and inefficient in fighting crime and criminality in the country. The nation's press have been critical of the Nigerian police particularly its abysmal performance in the area of crime control and prevention (Ogunmade, 2002: 32). Officers and men of the force have also been accused of colluding with criminals to commits crime. They have been accused of lending out arms and ammunition to armed robbers to rob as well as providing information for robbers on when and where to rob. In some instances men of the Police Force are accused of engaging in criminal activities like robbery, kidnapping and other nefarious activities (Igbokwe 2010: 20).

Aside the allegation of poor performance in fighting crime and the act of colluding with criminals, NPF has also come under increasing criticism for acts of extortion at both legal and illegal

roadblocks on the streets of Nigeria's major cities and on the nation's high-ways (Human Rights Watch 2010: 26; Baker 2002: 129). The police force is also criticized for the problems relating to harassment, threats to kill and murders. Extortion by the police has been turned to a viable business venture by some personnel of NPF. The acts have reached an alarming state and become great scandal in commercial cities like Lagos where extortion has become endemic within the ranks and files of the Force (Human Rights Watch 2010: 26-50; Punch 2010: 14; Olumide and Nwannekanma 2006: 13). The spate by which violent crimes are being committed daily and the extent of desecration of law and order are indications of lack of capacity by NPF to uphold the law and maintain order.

In seeking to explain the threats to people's security that emanates from the conducts of the Force and the actions of the Nigerian State, this work is anchored on the explanation of the political economy. The argument of the political economy analysis is premised on the assumptions that strong relationship exist between the political and economic structure of state. It says that the political and economic structure of a society inform its subsisting values, norms and its governance pattern. The protagonist of this model also posited that a better picture of a state is given by a comprehensive overview of the relationships between the economy and polity as well as their intricate relationships with other structures and institutions within a society.

Adapted to the study of police, the model suggests that the issues relating to the preservation of law and order need to be seen as the reflections of the manner a society structures its economy, particularly the interests that drive it (Alemika and Chukwuma 2004: 5). The argument being that the promotion and the preservation of the interests of the dominant group is what the state established the police and other law enforcement institutions for. However, contrary to the view that a simple understanding of political economy on the roles of the police might produce, it needs to be noted that police role cannot be confined to repression and the maintenance of *status quo* alone. A robust view is to see policing as duty that contains lots of contradictions. This is because the police repress and serve the public as well. What is essential is the need to know that the priority attached to repressive and service functions of the police

varies across societies. It depends on the social organisation of such society, the nature of regime and the orientation of the ruling elites. Since the police are part of and not separate from the society they serve, its roles, operations and conducts will be conditioned by the socio-economic and political organisation of the society. Therefore the issue of police extortion and other corrupt practices as well as police violence and lawless law enforcement reflect the character of the Nigerian state and society.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **NPF: Endemic Culture of Violence, Extortion and Corruption**

Past constitutions in Nigeria legislate for a single national police agency for the Nigerian federation. Like its predecessors, the 1999 Nigerian Constitution contains provisions on the NPF, Police Council and the Police Service Commission. The constitution states that:

There shall be a police force for Nigeria, which shall be known as the Nigerian Police Force, and subject to the provisions of this section, no other force shall be established for the federation or any part thereof (FRN 1999: Article 214-1).

Being a centralised federally administered institution, the police force is under the command of an Inspector General of Police (IG) appointed by and answerable to the President of the Federal Republic. The overall control of the NPF is vested in the office of the President while the IG has control over the command and administration of the institution as dictated by the President (FRN 1999: Section 215-3; FRN Police Act 1990: Section 9 [4]-[5]).

Nigeria's 36 federating units and the Federal Capital is served by a command, under a Police Commissioner. Three to four commands are merged to become a zone. There are 12 zones, each placed under the control of an Assistant Inspector-General (AIG) of Police. Governing the establishment, structure, command and management of the NPF is the Police Act and the Nigerian Constitution. The Act stipulates that:

the Police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of crime, apprehension of offenders, the preservation of law and order, the protection of life and property and the due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which

they are charged (FRN Police Act 1990: Section 4).

However, the capacity of the Nigerian Police to discharge effectively those functions assigned to it by the Police Act is seriously undermined. Factors that account for the challenges are both structural and institutional. Structural factors include: over-centralisation, long time neglect of the agency particularly under military regimes, economic exploitation, poverty and widespread corruption that has eaten deep into social fabric of the nation among many others. The institutional factors include but are not limited to poor training, dilapidating structures and facilities, poor remuneration package, poor condition of service and hostile police-public relations. These factors among others have constrained the force and reduce its capability to function effectively as a bulwark against crime and in consonance with subsisting laws, international statutory regulations and the ethics of the profession (Alemika and Chukwuma 2004: 13).

The Force's poor capability has made the use of torture, violence, inhuman treatment, and extra-judicial killing the preferred alternative for personnel of the Force in their bids to combat crime and criminality. In the same vein, the poor working condition particularly with regards to wage and salary has reinforced the tendency of Men of the Force to engage in extortion and other related corrupt practices. The use of force and the acts of extortion by the ranks and file within the NPF further reinforce public perception of the Force as an ineffective, abusive and corrupt institution (Open Society Institute and NOPRIN 2010: 11-12). The twin evils of Police brutality and act of extortion that characterize the operations and conducts of Men of the NPF has driven a wedge between the Police and the people it serves.

The culture of violence and brutality is an ingrained habit among the ranks and files of the NPF. With tacit approval of political leaders and regulating authority, personnel of the NPF do conduct their operations outside of the bounds permissible by laws. The culture of police repression and brutality that characterised the working of colonial police and carried over to the post-colonial era was strongly institutionalised during the long years of military dictatorships (Alemika and Chukwuma 2000: 21). Unfortunately, this culture of violence and brutality continues to manifest in the activities of the Force

after the nation returns to democratic rule in 1999. It seems as if Nigerians, particularly the poor have resigned to fate as they have lost hope in the fact that the police can change to become lawful in its operations and conducts. To many Nigerians, the fear of Police is the beginning of wisdom. Affirming the position that Men of the Nigerian Police Force actually threaten rather than protecting citizen security, the Human Rights Watch in a report notes that, 'institutionalised extortion, lack of political will for reform and impunity mean Nigerians are more likely to encounter police threatening them and demanding bribes than enforcing law' (*Vanguard Newspaper* 2017).

The Nigerian Constitution protects human dignity and frowns at torture and other inhuman treatments (FRN 1999). Aside the constitutional guarantee, international conventions ratified by Nigeria also prohibit the recourse to torture by the Force and other state security institutions in the course of carrying out their functions. Despite these guarantees and commitment by the Nigerian state its security forces, particularly the Nigerian Police, have engaged in the act of torture against persons detained in their custody (Human Rights Watch 2010, 2005; Open Society Institute and NOPRIN 2010). The recourse to force, violence and brutality by the police in Nigeria is widespread and manifest in various ways and forms.

The most common forms of abuse inflicted by the Police on detainees in police custody include; beatings with metal rods, sticks, planks, and horsewhip (*koboko*). The police also engage in the tying of arms and legs of detainees tight behind the body, spraying of tear gas on the face of victims, electric shock, the use of death threats, shooting of victims in the leg or foot and other acts meant to inflict maximum pains on their victims. There were also incidences of rape, sexual harassment and abuse of detainees by men of the Nigeria Police (Amnesty International 2017; Human Rights Watch 2010: 40-50; Open Society Institute and NOPRIN 2010: 21-22).

In a report of a study conducted by the Nigeria National Human Rights Commission (NNHRC) and the Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN) in 2000, it was noted that over 77 percent of inmates claimed that they were beaten by police, threatened with guns and torture in various police detention centres across

the country (Alemika and Chukwuma 2000). Amnesty International teams that visited numbers of Prisons in Nigeria in March 2002 also reported several incidences of torture and other degrading treatment of detainees in police detention facilities (Amnesty International 2002: 7). In the same vein, a Human Rights Watch study conducted in March 2005 also reports massive abuse and degrading treatment of detainees by men of the Nigerian Police Force to be routine and common (Human Rights Watch 2005: 1).

Victims of torture who tried to get justice are confronted by innumerable challenges. Those who reported their ordeals to police authorities or representative of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are often intimidated, harassed and their bids to seek redress obstructed by the police. The fact that most instances of police abuse and brutality often go unpunished, this has no doubt emboldened perpetrators and furthered the entrenchment of culture of violence among men of the Nigerian Police Force (Open Society Institute and NOPRIN 2010: 11-12). Impunity and the lack of accountability therefore remains one of the greatest impediments to the reduction of violence and police brutality in Nigeria.

Further compounding the crisis is the ingrained societal acceptance and/or toleration of torture and other abuses by the police as acceptable methods in the fight against crime. There are instances in which torture and abuse of detainees and suspects in police detention centres led to death in custody. In such instance, the police mostly attributes deaths in custody to bungled attempts by suspects to escape or rather labelling the victims as suspected armed robbers thereby ensuring public sympathy and inaction from police authority to probe allegations of extra judicial killing by families of victims (Human Rights Watch 2010: 47-50). There are numerous reports by local and international NGOs and the Nigerian press on the issue of extra judicial killing by men of the Force. To this end, the NNHRC had noted its apprehension that 'many innocent Nigerian may have been killed and labelled as criminal suspects in order to rationalise police use of violence' (Human Rights Watch 2005: 18; Amnesty International 2002, 2003).

Extra judicial killing outside police detention centre are often associated with the operations

of special task forces set-up to combat upsurge in violent crime and banditry, especially in Nigeria's major cities and highways. These Special Forces like the Mobile Police (MOPOL) and the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) are select groups, specially trained, equipped and charged with the mandate of fighting crime. These units, which operate more like death squad have become notorious as it relates to the use of violence (Human Rights Watch 2010: 47-50; Amnesty International 2002: 15). Though most cases of police extra judicial killings have gone unchallenged by the public, yet, few have attracted wide publicity and thus necessitate state actions in the form of setting up commissions of inquiry. Two of the most notorious cases of such killing that have attracted public attention were the killing of two school boys in Nsukka, Enugu State on March 10, 2002 and the killing of six traders at the Apo area of Abuja, the nation's Federal Capital city between 7 and 8 June, 2005. In the Nsukka case, popular protest forced the state police command to empower a panel to investigate the killing of the two boys. The report that was released in April, 2002 held the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) responsible for the murder and recommend he should be charged to court for criminal prosecution while the junior officers implicated were to face severe disciplinary actions. Unfortunately, the recommendations, of commission of inquiry has not been implemented and the erring officers have not been brought to justice (Civil Liberties Organization 2003).

The wide publicity and massive outcry that was generated by the killing of the six Apo traders and the needs to act made the Federal government to empower the Justice Olasumbo Goodluck Commission of Inquiry to look into the circumstances surrounding the killing of the traders and offer recommendations. The six-member commission inaugurated on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, 2005 makes recommendations on how to avert such abuse in the future (CLEEN 2006). These two cases were not isolated cases of police violence and extra judicial killing, rather they fall into the pattern of violence and killing perpetrated by men of the Force. In its latest country report, Amnesty International, AI (2017) notes that the Nigerian Police and the military continued to engage in torture and ill-treatment of suspects during interrogation and in detention basically as a mean of extracting forced confession. The

report specifically single out the Police Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) for been notorious when it comes to torture and mal-treatment of detainees and suspects in its custody (Amnesty International 2017).

Though the use of force by the police against Nigerians has been recognized as a routine and recurring challenge facing the nation by the government and police authorities, yet sustains efforts at addressing the problem is lacking. This position was affirmed in a report by Network for Police Reform in Nigeria (NOPRIN) and the Open Society Initiative, when they note that: 'Men of the Nigerian Police Force enjoy unbelievable latitude of impunity and that the government consistently fail to exercise due diligence in investigating or ensuring accountability for police abuses' (Open Society Institute and NOPRIN 2010: 22). While the incidence of police brutality is pervasive in Nigeria, however, this malady is not peculiar to Men of the Nigeria Police Force alone as reports have shown that the culture of impunity reign supreme in the operation of police institution in Africa. For instance in a 2017 report, Corruption Watch Act, a South Africa civil society organization noted that anonymous whistle-blowers provide it with reports on how police officers physically abuse members of the public as well as incidence of forceful confiscation of personal belongings and/or their destruction largely because of the refusal, unwillingness and/or inability of individuals to engage in corrupt activities as directed by rogue cops within the ranks of the South Africa Police Service (SAPS) (Corruption Watch Act 2017: 18).

Aside police violence, corruption and corrupt practices by personnel of the Nigerian Police Force is also one of many factors that have given rise to the negative public image face by the police (Human Right Watch 2010; Open Society Institute and NOPRIN 2010). Though literature (Ivkovic 2003: 593) has shown that no police agency in any part of the world is relatively free of and immune from corrupt practices, yet instances in Nigeria as in other part of Africa has shown that corruption and criminal enrichment by men of the national police institutions has become a norm rather than the exception. In Nigeria like other African states, police officers the 'blue knights' trusted with and empowered to uphold the law have become the most aggressive criminals preying on defenseless citizens. Effective policing in Nigeria is greatly ham-

pered by the evil of corruption since criminals can easily bought their way through police investigation and walk out of police stations without facing the full wrath of the law for crimes they have committed. Corruption Watch Act (2017: 8) also notes that reported incidences of corruption perpetrated by personnel of the South Africa Police Service, SAPS rank prominent in the reported case of corrupt acts that the public anonymously reported to the organization and on which it takes actions.

The acts of corruption within the police knows no bound as both the low and high ranking officers have been found guilty. That no police officer is immune from partaking in the evil deed no matter the position of authority occupied was shown by the indictment and prosecution of the former IG Tafa Balogun, by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) (Human Rights Watch 2010). The former number one police officer has since been found guilty of the charges against him, convicted and sentenced to 6 months imprisonment by a Federal High Court (Ajayi 2005). Allegations of police corruption emanate on daily basis and fill the pages of Nigeria's daily newspapers. Corrupt practices by men of the force manifest in many forms which includes: extortion of motorist at illegally mounted checking points, taking of material gratification to pervert the course of justice, extortion of persons arrested on frivolous charges, leasing of arms and ammunitions to criminals and other sundry corrupt practices (Human Rights Watch 2010: 24-40; Onyeozili 2005: 42).

Highlighting the pervasiveness of police corruption in public life in Nigeria, the first nationwide survey on corruption by the Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics in partnership with the United Nation Office on Drug and Crime finds incidence of police corruption as the most prevalent. The report note that Police officers are the type of public official to whom bribes are most commonly paid in Nigeria. According to the report, of all adult Nigerians who had direct contact with a police officer in the 12 months before the conduct of the survey, almost half (46.4 percent) paid that officer at least one bribe, and in many cases more than once since police officers are also among the three types of public official to whom bribes are paid most frequently (5.3 bribers per bribe-payer over the course of 12 months) in Nigeria (United Nations Office on

Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) and National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) 2017: 7). Similar stories of police corruption and the shielding of corrupt officials by senior and heads of units and commands has been noted to have aggravate incidence of corrupt acts within police institutions in Africa. According to Corruption Watch Act (2017: 18) failure of senior officers and the police authorities in Africa to punish errant personnel tend to embolden officers implicated on corruption charges. This in turn largely undermines human security of citizen as those that are expected to protect life and property have turned to extortionists and criminals that wilfully abuse those they are constitutionally mandated to protect.

The acts of extortion by men of the police force, more than any other corrupt practices, has earned the Nigerian police the negative image that it now carries like a cross. This have informed the perception held by some Nigerians that the Force has largely failed to be alive to the responsibility of providing public safety. Close to a century of its establishment, personnel of the NPF are perceived more as predators than protectors and the force has become a poster child of Nigeria's story of unbridled corruption, mismanagement, and abuse (Human Rights Watch 2010: 2). The assertion in the report of the *2008 Presidential Commission on Police Reform* that 'instead of the police been seen as a public asset, the force has become public burden' vividly highlighted the negative image of the Nigerian Police in the eye of Nigerians (Open Society Institute and NOPRIN 2010: 21; FRN 2008: 196). A recent study by Akinlabi (2017) also find out that public cynicism towards the law is informed by the experiences of police abuse, perceptions of police abuse, perception of police corruption and procedural injustice. All of these issues fuelling public cynicism of the law had been reiterated in this present study (Akinlabi 2017: 169). This present study also support the findings of Akinlabi (2017) Agbibo (2015) and Alemika (2010) that the relationship between Nigerians and the police is highly problematic one that is devoid of trust and respect. This is largely because policing by personnel of the Nigerian Police Force is often conducted through intimidation, abuse of power, corruption, impunity and general disregard for procedural justice and rule of law as enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria,

1999, the enabling Police Act of 1990 and other international documents guiding the conduct of police authority across countries of the world.

### **NPF and Its Sanitising Efforts**

On its part, Police authority in Nigeria in an efforts to address the above challenges is making spirited efforts to address the core challenges confronting the force by putting in place institutional mechanism and punishment for its erring officers and men. The establishment of Public Complaint Rapid Response Unit (CRU) and the deployment of social media platform to aid citizens' reports of police corruptions, grafts and abuse is a reflection of the Force Authority commitment to stamp out incidences of abuse and graft within the force's ranks and files (Aigbegbele 2016; *Premium Times* 2017). In the same wise, the punishment meted out to officers and men found guilty of misconduct is also an indication of Police Authority attempt at punishing erring personnel of the force. For instance, it was reported that 51 officers were dismissed from the Nigerian Police between May and November 2015 over established cases of corruption against them. In the same period, 56 policemen face punitive actions including demotion of rank for their involvement in corrupt cases (Usman 2016). In a similar vein, in 2017 Abayomi Shogunle, Head of the Nigerian Police Public Complaint Rapid Response Unit report demotion and sanctioning of officers and men of the Force for professional misconduct (*Premium Times* 2017). The Force authority is also making efforts to minimise the attachment of police personnel to political personalities and wealthy Nigerians. The force authority is making efforts to address the challenges of training and intelligence gathering through the revamping of Force training schools across the country (Omonobi 2015).

Aside the enforcement of punitive measures against erring personnel of the Force, the police authority is also putting much focus on staff emolument, welfare and training. The force management in recent time striven to improve on welfare of its officers and men through regular promotion, accelerated promotion in recognition of good deeds, courageous acts and/or exceptional performance in the line of duty. The authority of the NPF have also inaugurate the Educational Scholarship Foundation to aid the educational pursuit of its personnel and their wards.

The NPF have instituted Police Housing Welfare Project in partnership with the private sector to enhance the delivery of affordable housing for personnel of the Force. The Force management have also instituted the Police Group Life Assurance Scheme and the Nigerian Police Group Personal Accident Insurance Scheme for the Force personnel dead or living (Aigbegbele 2016).

The promotion for performance in the line of duty, educational foundation, housing project, life insurance and accident insurance schemes are novel welfare mechanisms that the Force authority intends to use to encourage its personnel to give their best in the service of the force, the Nigerian state and its people. They are also intended to help in minimising the incidences of extortion, bribery and other forms of corrupt practices among officers and rank and files of the Force. Without doubt, the force authority is trying to work on the challenges confronting it, enhance efficiency and effectiveness of its officers and men and improve on its image in the eye of Nigerians.

### CONCLUSION

Since the inception of the modern State system, the need to maintain law and order, protect the sanctity of life and property has been at the top of agenda of political leaders. Informed by this, the issue of security has remained the core responsibility and priority of modern state. It is an issue which states irrespective of their size and strength has come to take as highly important to their continued existence. In order to fulfil this core mandate the state established "Police Institution", invests it with coercive power and delegated to this body of armed men the responsibility for the maintenance of law and order. In order to minimize abuse of power, national constitutions, international conventions, police orders and professional ethics are put in place to regulate the use of force by national policing institutions. Despite the checks, the police in most states sometimes employed force beyond the limits allowed by law in the discharge of their duties and responsibilities.

Informed by this realization, this study examines the challenges of policing in Nigeria under the subsisting democratic dispensation. It discusses the incidences of police violence and corruption and how this permeates the fabric of

police institution in Nigeria. The study notes that the NPF has demonstrated inefficiency in the performance of its constitutional duties. The police as a result of its colonial history and number of other factors which are both structural and institutional remain an agency bisected by complex challenges. Given the negative image that the conduct of the NPF has engendered in the mind of Nigerians, there is the need to carry out sweeping structural and institutional reforms to redirect the Force to the path desired by Nigerians. The national government should adequately fund the activities of the NPF given the enormity of the task of policing it is saddled with. Community policing is essential so as to enhance cooperation between the police and the communities it is meant to serve them.

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