

Rethinking Police Centralisation in Nigeria: Decentralisation as a Strategy for Addressing Organised Crime, Kidnapping, and Terrorism

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Abstract

Nigeria is in the throes of an internal security crisis, and has witnessed the greatest threats to internal order and national cohesion. Never since the civil war (1967-1970) has insecurity become so pervasive, with fear, anxiety and suspense so high among the citizens. There are mass killings, destruction, and collateral damage across the country amidst organised violent crime. The country has been held captive by terrorists, bandits and kidnappers. As expected, the Nigerian Police has come under severe scrutiny, with questions raised about the effectiveness and performance of its personnel, command and control, deployment, and management. On this worrisome character of internal security, this study examines the decentralisation of the police. Specifically, the establishment of state police/community policing as a means of mitigating organised crime in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Policing; Organized Crime; Police Force; Kidnapping; Terrorism.*

INTRODUCTION

Policing is as old as human civilisation and has remained a fundamental mechanism for maintaining law and order in every society. It has evolved from a traditional style, in which the youth in society were entrusted with the responsibility of providing security and enforcing law and order, to a modern form in which community safety and internal security lie squarely on the shoulders of the state through some institutional mechanism. The imperative of policing is underscored by the fact that security is a critical aspect of life, and no meaningful development can take place in the absence of security and law and order in society (Bayley, 1994; Newburn, 2008). According to Alumona (2019), security is one of the most fundamental conditions required for human existence in the modern state. In fact, the modern state itself is principally a product of the realisation of the need for security among the individuals inhabiting it.

Policing has kept pace with human development, mutating in form and organisation in response to the prevailing security needs of the people and emergent internal security threats. The police, therefore, could be described as the primary agency of government, exclusively charged with maintaining internal security through law enforcement processes and ensuring domestic peace and community safety at all times (Newburn, 2008).

In Nigeria, policing in its formal structure dates back to the era of colonialism in 1860. Unlike in many federations, the responsibility for policing has been primarily vested in a single entity: the Nigeria Police Force. Section 214 (1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal

Republic of Nigeria (as amended), provides: ‘There shall be a Police Force for Nigeria, which shall be known as the Nigeria Police Force and subject to the provisions of this section, no other force shall be established for the Federation or any part thereof.

Section 4 of the Nigeria Police Act, (2020) further provides the following functions for the Nigeria Police Force as; prevent and detect crimes, and protect the rights and freedom of every person in Nigeria as provided in the constitution, the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Right and any other law; maintain public safety, law and order; protect lives and property of all persons in Nigeria; enforce all laws and regulations without any prejudice to the enabling Acts of other security agencies; discharge such duties within and outside Nigeria as may be required of it under this Act or any other law; collaborate with other agencies to take any necessary action and provide the required assistance or support to persons in distress, including victims of road accidents, fire disasters, earthquakes and floods; facilitate the free passage and movement on highways, roads and streets open to the public; adopt community partnership in the discharge of its responsibilities under this Act or under any other law; and vet and approve the registration of private detective schools and private investigative outfits (Nigeria Police Act, 2020).

By this Act and the constitution, the Nigeria Police Force is the primary agency of government vested with the statutory powers and responsibility for the management of internal security. Over the years, the Nigeria Police Force has striven to manage internal security and maintain law and order in society. This is not without attendant challenges of policing a plural state like Nigeria. Emergent crimes, often interpreted along religious and ethno-regional lines, have become more pronounced, organised, and diffusive, highly lethal with unprecedented sophistication. The lethality and frequency of the organised crimes in Nigeria today have continued to impugn on the ability of the Police Force to provide adequate internal security. The efficiency of the Police Force in performing its statutory functions is strategic to the nation’s economic growth, political stability, and national development. This is underscored by the fact that no meaningful development can take place in the absence of security, law and order in society. Suffice to say that the police are crucial to economic development and the survival of democracy (Osuji, 2013; Oshita & Ikelegbe, 2019).

Internal security management in Nigeria remains a complex task, as the police seek to strike a balance between optimal discharge of functions and adherence to human rights protection, court orders, and international best practices. The result of this difficult situation is a widening gap between people's expectations and the police's performance. In response to an effective police force geared towards optimal functionality, the Government had set up committees on the reform of the Police Force, the creation of the Police Trust Fund (PTF), yearly recruitment of 10,000 personnel into the force, salary increments, and other interventions aimed at repositioning the force for internal security management. The Police Force has undertaken internal reorganisation to meet the demands of policing Nigeria. However, these government interventions and efforts at police force restructuring have not produced the desired results when viewed against the security challenges bedevilling the nation (Bakare & Aderinola, 2019).

Scholars have approached the subject matter and proffered solutions: Odekunle (2004) noted that Nigeria is a colonial amalgam of diverse ethnicities, that do not originally share any cultural background or values, these nationalities come with diverse interests, and that fractured Nigeria Police has never been a cohesive caring agency in response to the needs of the citizens, hence the need for a decentralization/ community policing. Equally, Onyeozili, Agozino, Agu,

and Ibe (2021) argued that the post-colonial Nigerian police was a traditional force designed to serve the monocultural needs of an underdeveloped, mainly local agricultural society. Today, Nigeria has grown, becoming urbanised and organised, with 36 states. With urbanisation comes sophistication and the multicultural needs of the populace (including crime prevention), which the old, antiquated police system can no longer satisfy. Onyeozili (2005) stressed the method of posting in the Police force, where officers were posted to areas alien to them. Alemika (2013) frowned upon the command-and-control of policing, which ought to have given lower-level officers more initiative, flexibility, and greater bottom-up communication. Hunter, Pamela, and Thomas (2000) advanced the argument that the twenty-first century is the age of technological advancement and generational shift in perception and values. It is an embodiment of information technology, where the new generation can circumnavigate the world at the click of a mouse; so what is needed is a basic change in both the organisational behaviour of policing and strategy.

There is no doubt that the factors identified in the literature are compelling, but this study recognises that limited attention is given to the relationship between the quasi-military command structure of policing and unabated internal security threats, which have grown more organised in form, complex in their organisation and operations. This paper examines the decentralisation/community policing structure as a model for mitigating organised crime in Nigeria, vis-à-vis the security threat and the performance of the Police Force. This thought is divided into: Methodology; Framework of Analysis; Organised Crime; Command and Control of the Nigeria Police Force; Challenges of Policing in Nigeria; Decentralisation of the Police/Community Policing; Conclusions.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is largely a qualitative study that relies essentially on secondary data of published articles, books; official reports; Nigerian Police reports; media reports on the trajectories and nature of policing as well as the and dynamics of crimes and criminality in Nigeria. Data is analysed using qualitative descriptive analysis. Qualitative descriptive analysis primarily involves summarising the information generated in the research, so that appropriate analytical methods can be used to further discover relationships among the variables (Asika, 1991, p. 118).

Framework of Analysis

This paper adopts Queer Ladder Theory and Routine Activity Theory. The Queer ladder theory was propounded by an American Sociologist, Daniel Bell. The Queer Ladder is an attempt to explain organised crime as a desperate means of economic empowerment and social climbing. It presents crime as an instrument of socio-economic advancement, accumulating wealth and building power (Nwoye, 2000; Mallory, 2007; Lyman, 2007).

Often ascribed to this theory is that organized crime thrives in environment where the government's capacity to deter crime is weak and public corruption is endemic. It thrives where prospect for legitimate livelihood opportunities are severely restricted.

Under these situations, the incentive to indulge in crime is high, while deterrence from criminality is low. In cost and benefit analysis, the benefit of committing crime surpasses the risks. Applied to this study, the theory would enable us appreciate the institutional dysfunction and prevalence of organized crime and criminality in Nigeria.

While Routine Activity theory was formulated by Lawrence Cohen and later developed by Marcus Felson. It focuses on crime as an event, its motivation, while highlighting its relation to space and time (Clarke & Felson, 1993). It emphasizes the regularity of crime patterns and aggregate trends of organized criminal behaviours in society (Felson, 2008). It explains criminal event through three essential elements that converge in space and time in the course of operations, namely- suitable target, motivated offender and absence of effective guardian. It proposes that crime occurs during daily routines in normal life when suitable target is in the presence of a motivated offender and without a capable effective guardian (Clarke & Felson, 1993). It offers explanation to organized crime in Nigeria by focusing on the three elements that converge in space and time: object (victim), the offender (the criminal) and the guardian (the police), and of course provides a holistic approach in understanding the complex nature of continuing insecurity in Nigeria.

Organized Crime/Kidnapping and Terrorism

Due to the variety of criminal activities committed by organised criminals, an acceptable definition of the term 'organised crime' has been very difficult to arrive at. Chukwuma and Agada (2014) conceptualized organised crime as transnational, national, or local groups that are hierarchical in nature and engage in illegal activities. According to Giddens (2009), organised crime can be viewed as enduring small groups of professional criminals, hierarchically structured to carry out illicit activities of economic value to the group. In essence, their primary objective is to commit serious criminal offences, often driven by the pursuit of financial benefits. While organised crime is generally considered a form of illegal business, some organisations, like separatist and rebel groups, are politically motivated. Organised crime represents a complex and enduring challenge, distinct from individual criminal acts owing to its sophistication. These structured groups engage in illicit activities that impact societies globally, affecting economies and public safety through their persistent pursuit of illegal gains (Odoma, 2016).

Table 1: Some of the Attacks by Fulani Militia (Incidents and Casualties)

S/N	DATE	CASUALTIES
1.	February 21 st , 2016	Fulani militia attacked Agatu Community in Benin state, North central Nigeria, killing about 300 people (BBC New, February, 28 th July)
2.	May – September, 2014	The Fulani militia invasion of Agatu community has resulted in displacement of about 10,000 people (Daily Sun, February 24 th 2016).
3.	June 6 th 2016	Suspected Fulani herdsmen kill 26 persons, and injure many in Benue (Vanguard Newspaper, http://www.vanguard.ng.com/2016/06/suspected-fulani-herdsmen-kill-26-person-injure-many-benue).
4.	January 23 rd , 2017	10 people were reportedly killed by Fulani herders in Ipiga village in Ohimini Local Government Area of Benue state (This day, 24 th January, 2017).
5.	January 1 st , 2018	73 people were killed in a single day in Benue state (The challenges of mitigating herdsmen attack on people of Nigeria, lessons from Benue state, Public Lecture (Ortom, 2019).
6.	April – May, 2025	50 people were killed by supported Fulani militia in Katsina- Ala, Ukum and Gwer Local Government Areas (A.I.T. News, 15 th May, 2025).
7.	14 th June, 2025	Over 100 people were killed in Yelewata in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State by Fulani militia (Channels Television News, 16 th June, 2025).

Source: Authors' Compilation from the sources cited in the table.

The proliferation of organised crime in Nigeria is an unfortunate development that has become pervasive under the successive civilian governments of the Fourth Republic. Organised criminal activities in Nigeria include kidnapping, terrorism, banditry, and human trafficking,

among others. Although organised crime appears to be the defining feature of Nigeria in the global community in recent times, it was hardly ever noticed during the military interregnum.

Of all the forms of organised crime in Nigeria, twin evils of kidnapping and terrorism seem to have become so pervasive as well as lucrative, yielding high monetary returns to the perpetrators through payment of ransom by the victim's relatives (Okoli & Agada, 2014). These crimes differ from ordinary criminality because they seek not merely economic gain, but broader religious, ideological and strategic influence through fear. Their operations disrupt public institutions, weaken national cohesion, create humanitarian crises, and undermine economic growth. The long-term consequences include the displacement of communities, the destruction of infrastructure, educational disruption, and the erosion of public trust in state institutions.

Table 2: 9 Major School Abductions by Fulani Terrorist Groups Between 2023 – 2026

S/N	Institution	Incidents	Year
1.	Federal University of Dustin – Ma, Katsina State.	5 Students abducted	2023
2.	Federal University Gusua, Zamfara State	22 Students abducted	2023
3.	LEA Primary and Secondary School, Kuriga, Kaduna State	287 Pupils and Staff were kidnapped	2024
4.	Islamic Boarding School, Gidan – Bakuso, Sokoto State	15 Students were abducted	2024
5.	Darul – Kitab Islamic Orphanage and School, Kogi State	26 Pupils were abducted	2025
6.	Government Girls' Comprehensive Secondary School, Maga, Kabbi – State	25 School girls abducted	2025
7.	St. Mary's Catholic School, Papiri, Niger State.	315 Students and Staff abducted	2025
8.	Federal University Lafia, Nasarawa State.	6 Students kidnapped	2025
9.	Community Grammar School, Baptist Nursery and Primary School, and L.A. Primary School, all the schools in Oriire Local Government Area, Oyo – State	47 Students and Staff kidnapped	2026

Source: Author's Compilation from African Independent Television and Channels Television News, 16th and 17th May, 2026

The relationship between kidnapping and terrorism in Nigeria has become increasingly complex. What once appeared as separate security concerns now overlap through ethnic commonality (us versus them), shared operational methods, financing mechanisms, recruitment patterns and communication strategies, and this convergence complicates government responses. Notwithstanding these dastardly crimes being a recurring decimal across the vast stretches of the country, the police and other security agencies have not made substantial arrests and conclusively prosecuted these criminals in order to stem the tide (Ajayi & Aderinto, 2008; Chidi, 2014; Azowue, 2026).

Command and Control of the Nigeria Police Force

Nigerian Police is structured into 37 Police Commands, including the Federal Capital Territory. The headquarters of each command is at the state capital, headed by the Commissioner of Police, who superintends the operational, administrative and investigative activities of the command. According to Alemika (2013), the state commands are further organised into Area Commands, Divisional Commands, Police Stations, and Police Posts, with Police Stations and Posts as the primary operational units of public policing in Nigeria. Bakare and Aderinola (2019) noted that the command structure of the Police Force is premised on a regimental nature and structured around the badges of rank. This is predicated on the provisions of Section 215(2) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) and Section 6 of the Police Act, 1990,

which provides that the police should be under the overall command of the Inspector-General of Police, who is expected to give directives and direction to other officers and men for the purpose of effective and efficient policing. Section 5 of the Police Act also provides ranks in the Police Force in the following order as captured in Regulation 273 of the Police Regulation, Cap 359 laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1990:

- 1) Inspector-General of Police (IGP)
- 2) Deputy Inspector-General of Police (DIG)
- 3) Assistant Inspector-General of Police (AIG)
- 4) Commissioner of Police (CP)
- 5) Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP)
- 6) Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP)
- 7) Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP)
- 8) Superintendent of Police (SP)
- 9) Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP)
- 10) Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP)
- 11) Inspector of Police
- 12) Sergeant
- 13) Corporal
- 14) Police Constable

The Nigerian Police Force presently has 8 departments, each headed by Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG), 17 Zonal Headquarters headed by Assistant Inspector General (AIGs), 37 State Commands, including Federal Capital Territory headed by a CP, 235 Area Commands headed by ACPs, 1,444 Divisions, and 1,675 Police Stations and 3,525 Police Posts, with a strength of about 305,500 personnel (Annual Report of the Nigeria Police Force, 2018). The Department of Operations, formerly known as the 'B' Department, is central to Police activities in crime prevention, as it directly supervises and co-ordinates all operational activities of the Police Force, including internal security operations. The department provides strategic, tactical, and operational direction to all formations/commands of the Police Force. Nevertheless, in spite of these internal efforts of the Police Force at repositioning itself for optimal functionality in the discharge of statutory duties, greater percentage of the citizenry, as indicated in the survey of CLEEN foundation in 2009 and 2013, have continued to see the Police Force as inept as the incidence of insecurity –kidnapping and terrorism attack are on increase, rather than reduction (Alemika, 2013; Bakare & Aderinola, 2019).

Challenges of Policing in Nigeria

The problems of public security are perhaps the biggest challenges to Nigeria's consolidating democracy. Since 1999, the Nigeria police Force has been central to managing and responding to insecurity challenges. The drivers of these challenges to policing include poor government funding, systemic corruption, inadequate manpower, poor technology deployment, and an apparent public trust deficit. Corruption is particularly systemic in the police formation, a situation that many scholars have referred to as an intractable problem (Karimu, 2015). The inability to address the challenges makes tackling organised crime like

kidnapping, banditry and terrorism difficult. The effectiveness of any police force in a federal polity is closely tied to the structural arrangement. The centralised structure of the police force undermines the principles of power sharing in a federal system of government, and this breeds tensions and remains a bane to its efficiency. In the present structure, the office of the commissioner of police in the state, vis-à-vis that of the State Governor, presents contradictions in power dynamics and configuration under the 1999 Constitution (as amended) and the Nigerian Police Act (Alemika, 2013). The chief security officer of the state is the Governor, but the commissioner of Police in charge of the State command scarcely takes instructions from the Governor, rather from the Inspector General of Police, who is answerable to the President. The structure renders accountability vulnerable to political interference by the political class who often have the penchant to undermine or limit police effectiveness in enforcing the law or fighting organised crime.

The inherent contradictions and lack of accountability were made manifest in abysmal performance of police in the internal security management and battered image of the police as aptly captured by former Inspector General of Police, Mohammed Abubakar “The Nigeria Police Force has fallen to its lowest level and has indeed become a subject of ridicule within the law enforcement community and among members of enlarged public. Police duties have become commercialised..... Our men are deployed to rich individuals and corporate entities, leaving us without enough manpower to provide security for the common man. Our investigations departments cannot equitably handle matters unless those involved have money to part with.” (Owen, 2014).

Decision-making is concentrated at the centre, which can also be restrictive in some contexts. Accountability is centralised, and the police are essentially answerable to the President, the legislative committees of the National Assembly, and the Minister of Police Affairs, meaning that citizens, state and local governments have limited oversight powers. The only broad-based oversight agency is the Police Service Commission with powers restricted to recruitment, promotion and dismissal, concentrating mainly on senior officers (Odekunle, 2004). Political interference undermines the effectiveness and cohesion of the Police Force, and the hierarchical accountability structure renders it vulnerable to political interference, as corrupt officers may compromise their professionalism to curry political favour in the hope of future career advancement, thereby undermining their ethics (Owen, 2014) Equally important is the method of postings in the Nigerian Police Force. Under this stratagem, police personnel were posted to unfamiliar areas. This serious blunder in the foundational base of the Nigerian Police Force makes a good case study for immediate re-structuring and establishment of state and community policing to assist the country to recover from decades lost to the proverbial plague of locusts, and for the citizens to experience the benefits of democratic policing (Onyeozili et al, 2021).

Decentralisation of Police: State/Community Policing

The relevance of decentralising the police to the nation's internal security can be appreciated by the totality of the police's role in the internal security architecture. The whole weight of the powers and duties of the police should be spread across a balanced restructuring. By restructuring, the Nigerian police should have state/community police.

Argument for State Police

Due to the sophisticated nature of organised crime, kidnapping, banditry and terrorism, there has been advocacy for the decentralisation of the Police Force through the creation of

state police. State police refers to policing in a federation in which sub-national governments recruit police officers to police the state (Agwanwo, 2014). Operationally, state police is when policing operations and logistics are controlled by other tiers of government other than the national government. In recent times, agitation for restructuring and the practice of state policing have intensified in Nigeria, owing to the sophistication of organised crime and other criminal challenges that the present police structure is unable to tackle (Egunjobi, 2016). The quasi-military nature of the police force negates the principle of federalism. To this end, the police force needs to be decentralised into a two- or three-tier structure (federal, state, and community) as is found in federal systems such as the United States, Canada, and Australia.

Devolving the responsibility for police operations at the community level to the states, in addition to giving adequate attention to their welfare, would checkmate organised crime and other security challenges bedeviling the country (Aremu, 2014). In other federations, states adopt security architectures that serve their specific size, population, and ethnic and cultural identities for enhanced development, whereas the opposite is the case in Nigeria. While we are fully conscious that the misuse of local police forces by the regional governments contributed significantly to the collapse of the first republic, and it is a fact of recent reminiscence that the Dogarai (local police) were used to intimidate non-Muslims in the Northern region, the Western regional government under the Action Group used regional police (Olopa) to harass and burn the opposition in the “Operation Wetie” dousing opposition candidates or supporters with fuel and setting them ablaze (Onyeozili et al, 2021, p:110). There will be safeguards in the framework through constitutional amendments and an accompanying Act of Parliament to prevent misuse and excesses. Though state police might not be a panacea for a perfect police force, they will help fight organised crime in localities.

Given the sophistication of organised crime and other security challenges across the federation, there is an urgent need for police reform that will involve state governments in the management of national security. The preceding thought is premised on the following: Firstly, organised crime may have exogenous dimensions, but it is executed by local collaborators. To this end, it will be helpful to recruit police officers and men from their local areas to police their communities and states, as against what is obtainable presently, whereby a police officer from the Northern region will be posted to the Southern region, where he/she cannot understand the language of the people or know the environment of the posting. Secondly, the state governors, who are constitutionally the chief security officers of their states, have no control over the commissioner of police in charge of the state command, but with the creation of state police, the governors, who fund the force, can direct and exercise control over the police in the state. Lastly, in a situation where the president and the state governor are in different political parties, the commissioner of police will take instructions from the Inspector General of Police, who is answerable to the president, rather than the governor; this scenario brews tensions in the polity (Owen, 2014).

Rationale for Community Policing

Community policing is a concept that involves positive interaction between the police and community members, with a shared effort to prevent and control crime (US Department of Justice, 2014). In this joint enterprise, all members of the community become active in the communal effort to enhance the safety in the neighbourhood. The aim is to proactively prevent crime activities before it occur, thereby eliminating any atmosphere of fear. It is a contract between the police and the community they serve, based on mutual trust and respect that allows individuals to accept responsibility as stakeholders in their own community safety (Arase,

2018). Skogan (2004b) enumerated four general principles of community policing: community engagement, problem-solving, organisational transformation, and crime prevention through the collaboration of citizens and police.

Therefore, community policing emerged to underscore that unless the community keeps watch, the police only lose sleep in vain. For there will never be enough policemen to keep everyone under surveillance to stop organised crime. More than 90% of crimes are solved only with information from community members because members of these criminal groups are often in their midst. In most cases, the police cannot solve crimes if the indigenes do not risk becoming witnesses, ready to testify or anonymously tip off officers about a crime or suspicious movement. It is the community that is best equipped to observe crimes and report them or try to stop those (Onyeozili et al, 2021). Community policing involves partnership, which is an indispensable relationship. Partnerships are central to modern-day policing because they recognise a basic truth: crime or curbing crimes cannot be done by law enforcement agencies alone (Bullock, Erol & Tilley, 2006). This partnership should be established in order to build trust in the police to find solutions to organised crimes such as kidnapping and terrorism. Police can scarcely solve public safety alone; hence, police-community relationships should encourage interactive partnerships with relevant stakeholders.

DISCUSSION

The police remain a critical government institution responsible for maintaining law and order in society. The represents the civil power of government as opposed to the military power. However, the Nigerian Police under the control of the federal government has been unable to mitigate the rising incidence of organised crime. This calls into question the centralised structure of the police force, especially where the state governors are constitutionally the chief security officers of their states. The present structure renders the governors' position in the security architecture nominal (Adekanye, 2011; Aderinto, 2014). The inability of state governments to establish and control their police forces has adversely affected their ability to reduce crime within their jurisdictions. This is obviously with respect to incessant attacks by terrorists on farming communities, kidnapping for ransom, and banditry (Odoma, 2019)

According to Amnesty International (2018), Benue state has witnessed about 726 violent attacks on sedentary farmers by Fulani nomadic herdsman in 15 of the 23 Local Government Areas, resulting in the killing of over 500 persons. The enormity and the severity of these attacks are reflected in tables 1 and 2, respectively, with deleterious human cost, where families have been torn apart by violence and prolonged captivity. To worsen the situation, in these attacks, state governments could neither arrest nor prosecute the perpetrators. Though some state governments have created vigilante security outfits, they are not professional in intelligence gathering and, more significantly, are not licensed by the Constitution or the Police Act to carry sophisticated weapons that would match the arms of these criminals. This has greatly undermined the capacity of the sub-national governments to effectively combat organised crime such as kidnapping, banditry and terrorism (Odoma, 2019). The rise of organised crime in Nigeria represents one of the most tragic illustrations of how criminality such as kidnapping, banditry and terrorism has become an industry and institutionalised as societal conditions allow it to flourish. These criminal activities that were associated primarily with militant agitation in the oil-rich Niger Delta have gradually spread across every corner of the country, mutating into a lucrative enterprise model adopted by bandits, terrorists, and criminal syndicates seeking quick financial rewards. Organised networks now operate with

remarkable efficiency, gathering intelligence on potential victims, tracking movements, identifying financial capabilities, and coordinating negotiations with the precision of commercial enterprises. The growth of the illicit enterprise and concomitant ransom payments also reflect the weakness of the police force, which often struggles with insufficient manpower, inadequate funding, limited technological capabilities, and poor coordination (Azowue, 2026).

The numerical strength of the police force in Nigeria is 305,279 personnel, which is small vis-à-vis the population of over 242 million and about 923,768 square kilometres (356,669 square miles) (Nigeria Police Force Annual Report, 2018, FGN, 2020). Criminal groups exploit these weaknesses, operating in forests, remote communities, and ungoverned spaces where police and other security agents are either weak or absent. As it is difficult to police the vast landmass, there is an urgent need to rethink the structure of the police to create state police. Establishing state police will increase the police force's numerical strength and empower sub-national governments to oversee security within their domains. As every crime is local, well-trained, remunerated, and technologically equipped state police, in collaboration with community policing, will complement the efforts of the federal police in tackling crime and criminality through early warning systems, arrests, and speedy prosecution of offenders.

CONCLUSION

The persistence of organised crime should not be interpreted as evidence of invincibility. The same society that allowed the organised crime of kidnapping, banditry and terrorism to flourish possesses the capacity to dismantle them. Doing so, however, requires more than reactive police operations. It demands a comprehensive commitment to strengthening institutions. The police should be shielded from political appointments because such appointments corrupt the officers, destroy spirit de corps and skew their sense of neutrality. As the role of the police is to protect the citizens, efforts should be made to fully professionalise the police through training and re-education. And, more importantly, combating organised crime requires establishing well-trained, well-remunerated state police and community policing, creating economic opportunities, improving intelligence capabilities, reforming the justice system, and restoring public trust. It requires recognising that insecurity is not only a law enforcement challenge but also one rooted in broader questions of governance, inequality, and social inclusion. Until the structures that sustain kidnapping, banditry and terrorism are dismantled, Nigeria's journey toward peace, prosperity and national transformation will remain burdened by the most dangerous industry of this organised crime.

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