Prospects of Community Crime Control Initiatives in an Era of Terrorism: Lessons from Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Terrorism has arguably become one of the foremost security challenges besetting Nigeria today. Not only has the country lost so much interms of human and material resources to several terrorist attacks, the social and political colourations of this phenomenon have become the newest threat to Nigeria's corporate existence. Although the deployment of the combined team of the armed forces, the police, and allied state security services by government has recorded some successes, it is believed that much more successes would have been recorded if this response took the local people into confidence, especially because in many cases, the insurgents live and operate among these people. Against this backdrop therefore, and drawing from the success stories of the neighbourhood crime control groups in Lagos State, this paper explores the prospects of community crime control initiatives in fighting terrorism. The paper is anchored on the twin theories of community participation and partnership policing, and relies on data generated through indepth interviews and focus group discussions from purposively selected members of identified community crime control groups, Police personnel, community leaders and members across four Local Government Areas of Lagos State. The paper advocates the enlisting of community based crime control groups in the crusade against terrorism because of their closeness to the people and the enormous goodwill they enjoy. This way, the government would make the crusade against terrorism more participatory and inclusive aside engendering a sense of identification with and continuing responsibility for the exercise.

Key Words: Terrorism; Informal crime control; Nigeria

1. Introduction

These are certainly not the best of times for Nigeria and her teeming population of 170 million people. Before now, Nigerians only had to sleep and wake up with daily harassments and victimizations from 'conventional' criminals that were then the defining indices of social existence in the country. This has however, changed with the addition of terrorism since the country's return to civil rule in 1999 especially, a development that has imposed a new regime of apprehension on Nigerians and shaken to its foundation, their hopes in the continued survival of the country as one corporate whole. Although there is no official statistics as yet, a cursory reflection on the human and material costs of the endless bomb attacks on defenseless Nigerians as well as key government facilities, and the allied problems of abductions across the land only confirms that the country is indeed on a cliff. And much as domestic terrorism is not entirely new to our clime (Danjibo, 2009), the unfolding dimension of suicide bombing involving Nigerians is certainly new and puts a lie to the thesis that the average Nigerian is too cowardly and in love with life, to willfully surrender to death in pursuit of change no matter how well deserved. The development also indicates that rather than being people or culture-specific, suicide bombing and indeed proclivity to terrorism is a product of wide ranging elements that bear no link to skin colour and geographical location. Just anybody can become radicalized to become a terrorist, given certain conditions.

Perspectives on how Nigeria got to this cross road remain varied and complex. However, there is a commonality of view that the country's descent into violence and terrorism derives from the widespread disenchantment with the Nigerian State arising from its failure to meet its obligations to the people. Added to this is the perception that state policies are implemented to advance private interests for personal accumulation (Mu'azu, 2011; Forest, 2012; Zumve, Ingyoroko and Akuva, 2013; Oviasogie, 2013). In other words, the various groups unleashing terror and deaths whether in the Niger Delta, in the East, in the South west or in the north of Nigeria, are bound by a common factor of deep dissatisfaction with the Nigerian State even though these groups may have emerged under different historical circumstances. This sentiment is succinctly captured by Mu'azu (2011) as follows:

> ...the emergence of groups resorting to the use of terror and challenging the State over the monopoly of the use of the arsenals of violence, attacking State targets and instilling fear in the minds of citizens is not a historical accident. The various groups that emerge and are using terror as an avenue to be heard arose from their own direct experiences of how the Nigerian State has been treating the people and addressing issues that affect them. They may appear to exist in specific locations and settings across the country and seem to be disparate. However, their emergence is a call for the State to revise itself and take urgent steps to act in a more just and more equitable manner. It is the persistent feeling of the failure to do so that has led to the emergence of groups that resort to terror, constitute a

security challenge and even raise the question of the sustainability of Nigeria as one country.

Briggs et.al (2006) make similar arguments when they wrote that:

Any community that feels itself to be deprived, victimised or threatened will produce members who express their frustrations in a variety of ways. Some will look for positions of power to address injustices through official channels; some will stand back in apathy or through a sense of powerlessness; and others will take to the streets in vocal protest. Sometimes – but not always – a small minority will resort to violence, from riots and street fighting to terrorism and armed insurgency

At the centre of this failure of governance and therefore of the state is the hydra headed virus of corruption which has left in its heels insidious poverty, injustice, frustration, ignorance and hopelessness; and a countless number of alienated people (young and old) who find in terror a life time opportunity to settle their scores against an 'enemy' state (Sayne, 2011).

Predictably, the initial response of the Nigerian government and its security agencies was a disturbing hypocritical indifference and then, brutal suppression of these groups variously known in the parlance of the government as 'disgruntled', 'unpatriotic' 'undemocratic' 'misguided' and 'evil' elements. Government's counter-terrorism strategy has since expanded to include appeasement and dialogue, perhaps following the realisation of the futility of the sole application of force. This presumably informed the granting of Amnesty to the Niger Delta militants and the empowerment of their youths through various rehabilitation programmes. Buoyed by the relative successes of the Niger Delta amnesty programme, the Federal government also extended the olive branch to the now notorious terrorist sect, *Jama'atu Ahlus Sunnah Lidda'awati wal Jihad* (People Committed to the Teachings of the Prophet and Jihad), otherwise called *Boko Haram* by constituting a 26 man Presidential Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenges in the North. The mandate of the committee among others, is to 'constructively engage key members of the sect and consider the feasibility or otherwise of granting pardon to them'.

However, indications that the committee was not succeeding in its task became obvious when the sect continued with its consistent bomb attacks and steadily inched towards completely taking over a number of local government areas in the North eastern state of Borno. This again forced the government to scale up the military option by declaring a state of emergency in the three most affected states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. With this, the military launched a full scale onslaught on the group leading to its temporary dislocation and destabilization. But the initial euphoria and relief brought by this military response has proved short lived as bombs have again began to explode in several other communities with fears that fleeing members of the sect who have infiltrated other 'safe havens' both in the north and south of the country, would soon begin to unleash terror in their new domains. Now the military has become overstretched (The Nation, 29/07/13) and is beginning to recall its troupes on foreign peace keeping operations in Mali (Leadership Newspaper, 20/07/13) to the emergency states. Meanwhile, the Movement of the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) is stepping up pressure from the Eastern flank of the country just as the activities of kidnappers and illegal oil bunkerers in the South East and South South respectively, have continued to wear out the military.

This paper was conceived therefore against the backdrop of the seeming inability of the government to successfully deal with the threat posed by terrorism through the adoption of a strictly military option. It explores the prospects offered by informal crime control initiatives in tracking, preventing and reporting terrorism at neighbourhood levels. This is in response to the increasing agitation for a broad based community counter terrorism strategy and the growing understanding that community support is central in meaningfully preventing and winning the war on terrorism. The paper is divided into seven sections beginning with the introduction and followed in that order by the statement of problem, clarification of concepts, brief review of literature, methodology and discussion of findings. The last section examines the prospects of involving community crime control groups in counter-terrorism.

2.   The Problem

Terrorism, whether domestic or international, represents a direct onslaught on the authority of the political state and as well a threat to the state's sole monopoly of violence which Weber once ascribed to it (Weber, 1919: 506). Consequently, many governments view it as an 'armed attack' against the state and have thus often responded 'in self defense' with heavy military might (Carsten, 2003; Garwood-Gowers, 2004). Nigeria has toed this hard core approach in her counter terrorism war whether in the Niger delta region where militants took up

arms against the state or in parts of northern Nigeria where the Boko Haram Islamic sect has continued to terrorize the people. Unfortunately, just as the sole deployment of the Joint Task Force of the Nigerian Military failed woefully to deal with militancy in the Niger delta, the declaration of state of emergency and the attendant military onslaught in states perceived to be *Boko Haram* strong holds has failed thus far to check terrorist attacks.

Accurate statistics on the human and material costs of the various military activities going on in the country in relation to terrorism including the wasting of innocent civilians may not exist, but rough estimates suggest that they are better imagined. This explains the strident calls by security experts on the need to adopt a broad based response to terrorism. In particular there is increasing call to evolve a new counter terrorism strategy that would take local community members into confidence and get them to buy into as a cheaper, inclusive and more sustainable response. As Briggs (2010) further observes, aside other central role they may be enlisted to play, communities may be able to act as an early warning system for the police and intelligence services should they come across information or have concerns about particular individuals or groups. This is particularly so because while it is true that the terrorist threat often comes from a tiny and marginal minority, these individuals are integrated within their communities and are not, on the whole, loners working on their own. This study acknowledges the utility value of this new approach and sets out to assess the prospects of engaging neigbourhood or informal security structures in the war against terrorism. The setting is Lagos state with a visible presence of such structures at street, community and even local government or state levels.

2. Definition of Concepts

3.1: Community Crime Control Initiatives: This concept is used in this study to refer to all forms of unconventional security groups organized by community members to protect lives and properties in the community. It ranges from neighbourhood watches, communal guards, age grades and other forms of vigilante groups that are formed to enhance the safety and security of residents especially in neighbourhoods where the formal police are unable to effectively guarantee this. They are called different names in different communities and also vary structurally and organizationally from community to community.

3.2: Terrorism

Like numerous other concepts in scholarship, the term terrorism is fraught with understandable definitional controversies. The popular cliché that 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter' not only captures the genuine difficulties about defining the concept, but clearly suggests that its definitions are often subjective, context-specific or at best multifarious. At one level, the concept is seen as an attack by clandestine groups on non-combatants or civilians in order to draw attention by imbuing fear in the public to coerce a state actor from carrying out an action for their political objectives. It is in this sense that Title 22 Section 2656 (f) of the United States Code (USC) conceives of the term as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetuated against non combatant targets by sub national or clandestine agents usually intended to influence an audience" while Cronin (2003) conceives of it as "the threat or use of seemingly random violence against innocents for political ends by a non state actor." Central to these definitions is the emphasis on non-state actors and the clear silence on state actors. Yet, that some irresponsible state actors have also employed the tactics of terrorism to silence dissent and maintain power is common knowledge.

At another level, the definition of the term is stretched to include acts of violence carried out legitimately or otherwise by state or non state actors with the intent to cause fear, terror or death. In this category of definitions is the one proposed by the United Nations (1992) which conceives of the term as "an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individuals, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby-in contrast to assassination, the direct targets of violence are not the main targets". Coming from this stand point, Wilkinson (2006:6) notes that terrorism is a weapon- system which can be used by an enormous variety of groups and regimes (including state and non state actors), with rapidly differing aims, ideologies and motivations'. He adds that terrorism can be distinguished from other forms of violence in the following ways:

• It is premeditated and designed to create a climate of extreme fear.
• It is directed at a wider target than the immediate victims.
• It is considered by the society in which it occurs as 'extra-normal', that is, it violates the norms   regulating disputes, protest and dissent.
• It is used primarily, though not exclusively to influence the political behavior of governments, communities or specific social groups.

4. Previous Research

The idea of a community-based approach to counterterrorism is not entirely new having been the cornerstone of the approach once adopted in several countries including Northern Ireland. The approach however, momentarily took the back stage after the September 11, 2001 attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in the

United States, when some people began to think that the approach had become redundant in the face of what appeared to be an international, foreign and highly coordinated terrorist threat that required a correspondingly big, bold and international response (Briggs, 2010). But the continual changing national and global security environment and especially, the realization that home grown terrorism was on the rise across the globe has once again made a more localized and community-led approach to counter- terrorism very attractive (Briggs, Fieschi and Lownsbrough, 2006). The reason for the growing change of heart in favour of involving communities in different areas of the counterterrorism strategy is self evident. As Birt (2009) is wont to argue, while it is true that terrorist threat comes from a tiny and marginal minority, these individuals are nonetheless integrated within their communities and are not, on the whole, loners working on their own. Thus, if terrorists are well integrated, communities may be able to act as an early warning system for the police and intelligence services should they come across information or have concerns about particular individuals or groups (Briggs, 2010).

Besides, policing specialists and scholars have long recognized the value of community cooperation in generating social order. Specifically, studies from the United States suggest that policing strategies eliciting community cooperation have a potentially more significant effect on ordinary crime than strategies that do not involve the community (Bureau of Justice Assistance 1994; Hughes & Rowe 2007). And while the issue of whether public cooperation is as important to the success of policing against terror as it is to policing against ordinary crime remains a subject of continuing debate, the weight of evidence suggests that cooperation is at least as valuable to the police in the counterterrorism context as in the crime control context, and may indeed be of greater value where law enforcement personnel are more likely to be viewed as "outsiders" within the community being policed (Huq, Tyler, and Schulhofer, 2011). It is in this connection that Zhou (2012) talks about the relevance of policing through consent in counterterrorism as in any other area of law enforcement. This suggests that the police and Security Service cannot act without the consent of the communities they are there to protect, because they need communities to extend to them the benefit of the doubt when they make mistakes, and to forgive them infringements of civil liberties that might happen in the heat of the moment.

In underscoring the necessity of working in conjunction with communities in counter-terrorism, Patel (2011) points to a study by the Institute of Homeland Security Solutions which revealed that of 86 terrorist plots against U.S. targets between 1999 and 2009, 80 percent of the plots were foiled "via observations from law enforcement or the general public." Similarly, Jenkins (2011) observes that up to one-third or one-half of terrorist attempts were stopped by local (Muslim) communities reporting activities to police. Unfortunately this type of community- police partnerships is still a vastly underdeveloped resource for effective police work in most countries. Yet as Lyons (2002) observes, to continue to overlook them may contribute to weakening efforts to combat terror and other threats to liberty. This is because a successful war on terror depends on information, a resource which is embedded within local communities (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). Involving the community in the terror war as in combating other threats to security, will help to rebuild citizen trust and mobilize the latent informal mechanisms of social control that will enable communities to contribute to public safety, and increase police access to the critical information.

Community involvement in neighbourhood policing in Africa is also an old practice. In Nigeria, the practice even predates the formation of the Nigerian Police. Indeed, most local communities across the country, had their own community based policing arrangements to ensure the security of the population. Usually, these groups were composed of individuals from the local community, and often derived their credibility, and unofficial authority from the community in which they serve (Adejoh, 2013). These structures continued even after the formation of the formal police mainly to complement the police in identifying and handing over criminal suspects to the appropriate judicial authorities. Sometimes, they also tried to settle other conflicts between individuals in the community.

Four variants of community crime control initiatives or what most scholars simply refer to as vigilantism are observable in literature. These are religious vigilantism, ethnic vigilantism, state-sponsored vigilantism and neighbourhood or community 'vigilantism' (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2004; Adejoh, ibid). While differences exist among these variants of informal security structures as are obvious from their appellations, they however, share the common denominator of performing crime control functions (Chukwuma, 2002). The neighbourhood or community vigilantes consist of groups of people organized by landlords or street associations in the cities or villages in the rural areas, to man street entrances or village gates as the case may be, at night. They also carry out foot patrols at night to reassure members of the community that some people are watching over their security. Their *modus operandi* usually includes traditional divining methods, traditional protection methods, praying and fasting, and mob action. Okafor (2007) adds that typically, these groups consisted of able bodied young community members, supported financially and materially by other community members and charged with the task of securing the community and enforcing the law, often with the aids of small weapons, such as machetes, bows and arrows, spears, and some guns. They are also mostly active in the night than during the day. State-sponsored vigilantes became common as response to rising crime waves across the states. In Lagos state, the group popularly called Neighbourhood watch was established in the days of Brigadier General Buba Marwa

as governor of the State to assist with intelligence gathering and surveillance. The 'Bakassi Boys' were also used by the governments in the three eastern states of Abia, Anambra and Imo State, to fight crime and criminality.

The consensus in literature is that although each of these community crime control initiatives varies in terms of their structures and modus operandi, they all exist nonetheless largely to provide a sense of safety and security among residents. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the prospects of involving credible community crime control groups in counter-terrorism war.

5.   Theoretical framework

The paper was anchored on the twin theories of partnership policing and community participation. The former which is associated by Dennis P. Rosenbaum posits that the criminal justice system cannot, by itself, solve the complex problems of crime and disorder including terrorism that afflict society. Consequently, it advocates that resources from outside the system are needed, just as are new ways of thinking about diverse problems. Rosenbaum (2003) reckons that this can be achieved through the creation of partnerships that can bring distinctive but complementary skills and resources to the table and that can produce coordinated and targeted responses to public safety problems (Inyang and Abraham, 2013). The latter theory underscores the need to give control of affairs and decisions to people most affected by them, in this instance, community people. The advocates of community participation believe that besides serving as a means of getting things done, involving people in solving their own problems also brings many lasting benefits to people. First, it allows for the redistribution of power that in turn enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included (Arnstein. 1969). It also brings people together in creating and making decisions about their environment. Participation brings about individual empowerment, as people gain skills in assessing needs, setting priorities, and gaining control over their environment (Kreuter, M.W, Lezin N.A and Young L.A, 2000). Involvement by community members is a way to incorporate local values and attitudes into any programme and to build the layman's perspective into the programme. Community members' involvement can also provide access to local leaders, resources, and technical skills not otherwise available (Bracht N. and Tsouros A, 1990). Above all, participation engenders a sense of identification and continuing responsibility for any programme, often referred to as the principle of ownership.(Carlaw R.W, Mittlemark M.B, Btacht N. et. al, 1984).The aptness of this theoretical orientation is underscored by the increasing realization that no government or authority has the means to solve all the public problems adequately, and in the case of security, that the local people as stakeholders in their communities not only understand their neighbourhoods better but share the common aspiration of promoting and protecting it. It is also this realization that explains the increasing demand for state police, an arrangement which proponents believe would bring policing closer to the local people. Seen against the background of the war against terror, the understanding is that even though terrorist threat comes from a tiny and marginal minority, these individuals are nonetheless integrated within their communities and are not, on the whole, loners working on their own. Consequently, communities, if involved in the counter-terror could act as an early warning system for the police and intelligence services should they come across information or have concerns about particular individuals or groups (Birt, 2009; Briggs, 2010).

6.   Methodology

This was a strictly qualitative study and relied on both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to elicit the desired information. The study area covered Ikeja, Mushin, Ikorodu and Eti-Osa Local Government Areas of Lagos State, which were selected based on the existence of community crime control structures. There were a total of thirty-two In-depth Interviews (eight per LGA) with purposively selected members of identified community crime control groups, police personnel, executives of community development associations and traditional rulers; and sixteen Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with purposively selected groups of adult male, adult female, youth male and youth female community members aged 18 years and above. The data were transcribed and analysed using Microsoft Excel 2007 by sorting for patterns and filtering.

7.   Discussion of Findings

7.1: Forms of community crime control groups in Lagos State

Three broad forms of community crime control groups were identified in the communities that were studied. These are individual house-owner/occupant employed or the residential security guards popularly called *mai guards,* state- organised neighbourhood watchers, and community-organised night watchers, with the last being the most common and popular. Residents used such terms as vigilante, *olode*, night watchers or even OPC interchangeably and as deemed convenient to refer to the various community crime control arrangements, even though most of the respondents admitted that there exist clear differences between them in terms of structures and modus operandi. As an adult male respondent in an in-depth interview in Ikorodu asserted:

> The informal crime control groups are called different names by different people. Some people
> call them vigilante or *olode* while some people call them community night watchers or guards but
> they all mean the same thing, which are people who help to protect the communities from
> criminals especially at night.
>
> *Adult male (IDI, Ikorodu)*

The community-organised night watch groups which were in the majority in the communities, is a broad category representing the various strands of community self-policing initiatives, voluntary or paid, which are organized at various levels – streets, groups of streets or quarters, and entire neighbourhoods or communities, to provide security for residents, especially at night, but sometimes during the day. Included here are such groups as youth groups who organize into groups often on voluntary basis to provide security for their streets or neighbourhoods, groups of OPC members who provide security services to streets or neighbourhoods usually at a fee, and the one-man or few-men night guards who are also hired by streets or neigbourhoods to provide security at night. Also mentioned by a number of the respondents is the use of radio and aged persons in certain homes as security strategy. These last two forms of arrangements are driven by the belief that much of the fight against crime is psychological. In this instance, noise from a radio or the physical presence of someone in the house regardless of how old or infirm is deemed to be capable of scaring away certain thieves.

The variant of community night watch arrangement adopted or engaged by communities varied in accordance with their (communities) peculiar internal structures and characteristics. For instance, it was found that in the less cosmopolitan settlements where social relations are still reasonably simple, informal and interpersonal, and in a few of the cosmopolitan settings that have managed to retain a measure of their traditional structures as well as in settings where members are predominantly poor, neighbourhood policing was mostly conceived of as a communal activity. In such settings, community members take it upon themselves to safeguard their neighbourhoods at night, especially and sometimes during the day. Often, this service is provided by youths working closely with the traditional leadership or other respectable members of the communities to respond to the immediate security challenges of their neighbourhoods. A male respondent in Odi-olowo part of Mushin revealed:

> The youths are the people who provide security in this community at night. When we discovered that people were coming from outside to steal and rob here, we decided to intervene by patrolling the streets at night. Usually, we organize ourselves into groups and dissolve into different streets at night to keep vigil.... If we arrest any criminals, we normally take them to the Police.... We contribute small amounts from time to time to buy things like torch light and whistle that are used at night.... Sometimes, the *baale* (traditional ruler) and his chiefs also support us with logistics, but usually, we bear the bulk of the cost of our operations at night... our members are trusted people who must be above board in character.
>
> *Youth Male respondent (IDI, Mushin)*

In the more cosmopolitan areas where social relations are much more complex and formal, it was found that informal policing functions were usually contracted out to people who were paid monthly or as agreed upon. In such settings, members of community crime control groups resume at night and close in the morning. As an Imam who was interviewed in Ikeja noted:

> We have vigilantes in this area. Most of them are old men who retired from the military or the police. They come in the night and close in the morning. I don't know where they live and where they are from, but I know that they exist...we hear them making noise and brandishing cutlasses at night. Their identities are not always made open but they operate...
>
> *Adult male respondent (IDI, Ikeja)*

The second category of community crime control arrangement found by the study is State-organised neighbourhood watch, which was established by the Lagos State Government in 1996 to complement the efforts of the formal police through surveillance and intelligence gathering. Members of the outfit are usually recruited through the community development associations (CDA) and posted to work within their communities and local government areas of residence. In the words of one of the group's coordinators in Mushin Local Government Area,

> Neighbourhood watch is a type of community policing working for 24/7 (24 hours daily) for surveillance. We were established in 1996 by the Brig. Buba Marwa military regime. We are recruited by the state government and posted to various LGAs, ministries, hospitals, schools and everywhere mainly for surveillance. We have our own control room ...we report to the police and they respond immediately. We are under the State Ministry of Rural Development. (*IDI, Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator, Mushin*)

The last form of informal security arrangement common in the state was the individual house-owner/occupant employed security also called *residential security guards or mai-guards*. Participants in nearly all the focus groups discussions as well as respondents to the in-depth interview agreed that this category of guards are useful in manning residential gates and that sometimes their presence wards off petty thieves. As a participant in the female focus group discussion in Mushin said:

> *Mai guards* are not the same as vigilante or *olode*. They are *abokis* or mallams (an
> adulterated reference to persons mostly of northern descent) who are engaged by

> individual house-owners or residents as gatemen. Sometimes they double as security
> men. Usually, their work does not cover entire street or community.
>   *Adult female participant (FGD, Mushin)*

The demand for *mai-guards* is linked to the activities of petty thieves who sneak into compounds to remove household items while people are away. Some respondents also linked the presence of *mai-guards* to the loss of cars to robbers who lurk around residences as people come back from work. Usually these robbers would pounce on unsuspecting victims as they step out of their cars in a bid to open the gate and drive in.

7.2: Modus operandi of community crime control groups in Lagos

Although slight variations were discovered in the modes of operations of the various forms of community crime control groups identified in the communities studied, respondents however, reported that most of the groups operate during the night, essentially as night watchmen. Usually, they are stationed at strategic locations, but occasionally they patrol their neighbourhoods to frustrate and possibly apprehend anyone suspected of crime or of violating regulations on movement during the night. Also, except for the very few instances where security was said to be provided by just one man, most of the community crime control groups patrolled the streets and neighbourhoods in groups. The number of persons in a group varied from group to group and from community to community, depending on both human and material resources at the disposal of the groups or communities.

In communities where the youths take the security of their neighbourhoods as a communal matter, more people were usually available to patrol given areas. In this instance, the youths divide themselves into groups of between 4 and 7 to patrol various parts of the community while some other groups mount roadblocks in strategic locations after dusk (anytime from 11pm or even earlier in some places). This category of vgilantes often employs such tools as torches, whistles, horsewhips, sticks, boots and, sometimes, cutlasses.

In communities where community members have to pay the night watchers however, the number in a patrol team is usually less. The study also found that, in certain instances, some of these groups do not necessarily patrol the areas they are charged to guard. Instead, they just plant or sprinkle certain charms in the area under their watch, mutter certain incantations and simply go to sleep. Criminal-minded persons who trespass on such areas would literally lose their minds and would continue to roam within the vicinity until dawn when they will be apprehended. According to one of the community leaders in Ikorodu:

> The vigilantes in my street were recruited from Ijebu Igbo. Their operation is very
> simple. Every night, beginning from 11 o'clock, they would just move around the street
> making some incantations. After that, they would go back to their base. If you have
> criminal intent and pass there, you will remain there until they come to meet you, but if
> you have no skeleton in your cup board, you will have no problem. Unfortunately, due to
> financial constraints, the community could not afford to maintain them, so they left. They
> were armed to the teeth with voodoo.

>   *Adult male community leader (IDI, Ikorodu)*

When asked of the likelihood of the charm harming innocent persons, one respondent said:

> Never! It cannot hurt anyone who is innocent or even a criminal whose mission is not to
> rob in the given neighbourhood. Only those who have bad mind towards that particular
> neighbourhood or who plan to rob or do evil in that neighbourhood will become victims.
> We may not be able to explain this, but it is true and effective.
>   *Adult male community leader (IDI, Ikorodu)*

The members of the Odua People's Congress (OPC) were also found to rely heavily on the use of charms. According to one of their members in Mushin, 'we normally arm ourselves to the teeth with charms. We make incantations and use voodoo. When we hit you with our charms, you can become paralyzed or even die'. Part of the reservations of the Nigeria Police and several other Nigerians derives from this reliance on charms to determine culpability of suspects, especially because this has no logical or empirically provable foundation.

Apart from charms and incantations, it was also found that some vigilante groups make use of native guns, double barrel guns, cutlasses and other poisonous substances. As indicated earlier, many of their members are erstwhile hunters or servicemen who have used guns before. Some of them are permitted by the police to carry guns. In the words of one member of PCRC in Mushin:

> They (the night watchers) can apply to the police indicating their intention to carry guns.
> The moment the police can confirm that they have used guns before, they would grant
> them the permission. But they must also account for how they use these guns.
>   *Adult male respondent (IDI, Mushin)*

This does not, however, extend to the state-organised neighbourhood watchers or even the youth-based vigilantes. The state-organised neighbourhood watchers are generally not armed but usually have walkie- talkies which they

use to report incidences of crime or other threats to their neighbourhoods to the police or other relevant bodies like the fire service, in event of fire outbreaks.

The availability of instruments of violence in the hands of some non-state actors is considered a cause for worry by some scholars (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2004). The Nigeria Police has also expressed misgivings about the use of arms, charms, divination and traditional protection devices to identify suspects by some informal security groups (Ojukwu, 2008). The often common allegation is that some informal security groups are quick to resort to high-handedness, showmanship and abuse of fundamental freedoms of persons arrested by them.

However, these informal crime control groups have defended their possession and sometimes, use of arms and charms. As a member of the OPC reported:

> Even the police advise that one can use force in self-defence. We use weapons and charms to protect ourselves in the event that suspects turn violent and attack us. As you know, patrolling the streets at night can be quite dangerous... many of our members have been attacked by criminals in the past. Many of the criminals are usually heavily armed and you cannot effectively handle them with bare hands or sticks. Concerning charms, let me assure you that justice is a condition for their (charms) efficacy and when you break this rule, it normally would boomerang. People are just expressing fears because of ignorance about how it works.
>
> *OPC male respondent (IDI, Igbo Efon, Eti-Osa)*

It was also discovered that each of these variants of community crime control groups has its modes of recruitment, sustainability, supervision and of ensuring discipline and accountability.

7.3: Effectiveness of informal policing groups in neighbourhood crime control in Lagos State

The general sentiment across the local government areas covered by the study was that the presence of the community crime control groups in the neighbourhoods has helped in scaling down the rate of crime in most of the neighbourhoods. This can be explained from the point of view of the common understanding among security experts that, sometimes, the physical presence of security, regardless of how well equipped, can be a deterrent to criminals. As a male youth respondent in Ikorodu observed:

> The presence of the *olodes* (vigilantes) has reduced the level of crime because those who perpetrate this evil acts can no longer do it since there is a time restriction of movement within our neighbourhood from 12 midnight to 5am. (*Male youth respondent, IDI, Ikorodu*)

Most of the participants in the focus group discussions also concurred with the above assertion. In the words of one of the female participants in Ijede area of Ikorodu,

> They (vigilantes) have been able to control crime effectively because their presence is enough to scare away thieves... you will meet them where you do not expect they can be. They are everywhere. They walk around and when they see you they know the type of person you are ...They are very effective because they walk around everywhere in the night protecting the lives and properties of the residents. (*Adult female participant, FGD, Ikeja*)

The police participants in the study also agreed that the presence of community crime control groups have been quite helpful in stemming crime in the state. Their usefulness in alerting the police of the presence of hoodlums came across strongly. As one of the Divisional Police officers reported:

> We encourage communities that are under incessant attacks by robbers to form vigilantes to protect themselves because the police cannot be everywhere. Even our religions encourage self-defense, so our people have to come out and protect themselves. What they do is to divide themselves into groups and take turns to patrol their communities. Sometimes they quarrel among themselves because some will not cooperate. Even this last week some groups in.... came to complain that some of their members were not turning out for vigilante activities when it is their turn. Normally, I invite them to the station and address them on the need to support the police because we cannot do it alone. In most cases, they alert us when they notice the presence of criminals and we respond. This has been quite helpful
>
> *A Police Respondent (IDI, Mushin)*

The respondents who adjudged the community crime control groups as effective gave various reasons for their responses. These reasons are because they respond rather quickly to distress calls, are more reliable and efficient than the formal police, are actually faster and nearer to the people, and that they are incorruptible.

7.4: Prospects of community crime control groups in combating terrorism

One of the findings of this study is the consensus that informal crime control groups have helped in no small ways to curb the rate and cases of crime in the respective neighbourhoods where they exist. They arrest certain categories of criminals and help to furnish the police with information about crime and criminals that are beyond their ability to deal with. These organizations also enjoy tremendous goodwill of most of the people because they are closer and friendlier to the people, and less bureaucratic in dispensing justice.

It is these credentials that recommend these community crime control initiatives for further consideration in the on-going war against terrorism, albeit with some fundamental restructuring and in partnership with the formal police and other security services. In this era of constant threats of terrorist attacks across the country, nothing can be more important than intelligence gathering by community members, a function which the informal security groups can be orientated to perform. After all, they are part and parcel of the communities and therefore understand the people and their environments. More importantly, terrorists live and walk among the people and if properly mobilized and trained, these people and indeed the rest community members can act as an early warning system for the police and intelligence services in the event that they come across information or have concerns about particular individuals or groups. Okafor (2005) adds that the informal security structures are rooted in the traditions, customs, and native practices of the people and would more readily enjoy the understanding and cooperation of community members, a credential that is most critical for information gathering and intelligence gathering.

Additionally, policing practice has continued to witness fundamental paradigm shifts from its traditional notion as conceptualized by Sir Robert Peel in 1822, in response to the current realities of our times including especially, the growing global threat of terrorism (Kalidheen, 2008). It is in this light that it is posited in this paper that it is needful for Nigeria to re-evaluate its current approach to policing terrorism and begin to think seriously about a counter-terror approach that recognizes the importance of strategic partnerships between the police and the communities. This type of cooperative problem-solving approach helps in building trust between the police and community, and ultimately in engendering collaboration in problem-solving (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1994: 18), which is what the current terror threats demand. More so, there is an increasing understanding among security experts that it is practically impossible for any single agency to win the war against crime and that any comprehensive strategy to successfully fight crime must seek the partnership of other relevant stakeholders. Such partnership especially with community members helps to incorporate local values and attitudes into the security strategy of the country and as well provides access to local leaders, resources, and technical skills not otherwise available (Bracht N. and Tsouros A, 1990). Above all, it engenders a sense of identification and continuing responsibility or what is otherwise referred to as the principle of ownership in the people, which makes security a collective responsibility.

This has become the new approach in several countries including US, UK, Canada and Australia since the New York 9/11, London 11/7 and Madrid 11/03 terror attacks. Since then, Canada for instance, adopted a new security approach whereby members of the community are encouraged to survey suspicious neighbours or activities. Under the approach, the community became a strategic source of information which could then be utilized to counter possible threats of terrorism (Murphy, 2005). The approach also encouraged the police to invite active participative interaction with communities in policing programs through which local communities were then penetrated to provide intelligence in this manner. In Australia, the approach adopted was a combination of intelligence-led policing, problem orientated policing methods, and the network or collective policing approach to policing wherein policing responsibility is distributed to diverse entities which may be affected by terrorism in whatsoever manner including private security outfits, other government agencies as well as members of the public (Chan, 2001). The objective is to create a combined stance against crime irrespective of cultural and ethnic differences (Palmer and Whelan, 2006). This is also true of Finland and Switzerland where policing is considered a joint approach from a diverse spectrum of community-based groups working together to address security and prevention of crime (Schedler, 2006). In the case of the United States of America, former President Bush set up the Homeland Security and designed a National Strategy for combating terrorism that made provision for a role for the American Public/Civil security based on the principle of shared responsibility and partnership with the Congress, state and local governments, the private sector and the American people (Okiro, 2013) In Sri-Lanka, frequent attacks from terrorists in the wake of the country's civil war prompted the villagers to organize themselves into security groups to protect themselves. These groups known as Home Guards were recognized and armed by the government which then created the Home Guard Service and issued them uniforms and weapons and placed under the command of the Sri-Lankan Police Units. They were then posted to their home towns and villages as volunteers, to protect the civilian population from terrorist attacks. In 2006, the group became known as the Civil Security Force following the establishment of the Department of Civil Security (ibid).

The foregoing indicates that policing styles are highly context and history specific. It is also country specific. This presupposes that each country has to evolve its own concept of policing that suits its environment, its people and its crime problems. In doing this, it is pertinent that local realities that have worked and which enjoy the goodwill of the people should form part of the larger policing strategy of a people. For Nigeria and as the experience in Lagos state has amply shown, community crime control initiatives have remained popular, acceptable and largely effective in curbing neighbourhood criminality and can be reorganized to partner with the formal security agencies in the war against terror. First, this will make the challenge posed by terrorism and insecurity a collective responsibility; it will also make the search for solution much more inclusive and participatory. It was on the basis of this that Mike Okiro (2013), an ex- Inspector General of Police and the present Chairman of Police Service Commission (PSC) called for the establishment of what he called 'Civil Security Force' to complement the operations of the Nigeria Police Force at the grassroots level. He hinged his reasons on 'the positive impact of the youth civilian volunteer group in Borno state popularly called 'Civilian JTF' - a crop of young people that sprang up to complement the military joint task force by taking took it upon themselves to smoke out and haunt down elements of the Boko Haram Islamist terrorist in their neighbourhoods.

Participants in the focus group discussions agreed with the above suggestion. They suggested that government should work in concert with the CDAs or community leaders to standardize the activities of ISS groups, provide them with basic training on strategies for crime prevention and detection, basic equipment for operational efficiency and modest stipends to motivate them to work harder.

In the words of an in-depth interview respondent in Ikorodu:

> The general insecurity we have today will be drastically curtailed if the government can give just 10% of the support they are giving to the formal police or to other security bodies, to the ISS groups. As you know, we have CDAs in almost every community in this state. All that the government- local or state- need do is to get these CDAs to organize credible vigilante groups who would enjoy government support in terms of kitting, logistics and periodic training on intelligence gathering, surveillance and the like. This of course, will be with the full involvement and supervision of the police. Part of the so called security votes which the governors and the chairmen of local government areas are sitting on can be utilized along this line.

These suggestions agree with those made by respondents in an earlier study conducted by Alemika and Chukwuma (2004).

8. Conclusion

The changing environment of security both nationally and globally has made it expedient for countries to re-think and tinker with their policing strategies based on their peculiar realities. Although these preferences go by different appellations such as partnership, networking, collective, problem-solving, intelligence-led or community policing, they all acknowledge that rather than being the monopoly of the formal or public police, policing function is more effective when it is carried out as a collective responsibility of all critical stakeholders including members of the public. In Lagos state, the involvement of community crime control groups in crime control has been adjudged as quite helpful in fighting crime and criminality in the neighbourhoods. They enjoy tremendous public trust partly because of their deep cultural roots, closeness and accessibility to the people, and also because of the obvious inability of the formal police to guarantee safety and security in the state.

In view of the aforesaid, it is the candid position of this paper that the existence of informal policing groups presents an enviable platform that could be built upon in the country's current counter-terrorist efforts. A serious minded attempt should thus be made to understand them, train, organize and work out modalities for their integration into the larger security architecture of the country. It is in this wise that Baker (2005) advocates a strategy of law and order that "integrates, regulates, mobilizes and empowers all those willing to preserve law and order in an acceptable manner" The reason is because as part and parcel of their respective communities, they are better placed to gather security information that forms the basis of the counter-terror war.

9. Recommendations

Given the increasing global gravitation towards partnership or network policing and given also the acknowledged effectiveness of informal policing groups guaranteeing safety and security in Lagos State,it is the reasoned postion that these structures can meaningfully assist in Nigeria's current counter-terror war. However, to effectively do these, it is important that the following recommendations are given due consideration.

There is the need to carefully articulate and standardize the parameters for the operation of informal community policing initiatives in the state to avoid present and future possible abuses where in these structures are indiscriminately set up.

Next to the above is the need to evolve a new strategy of law and order which will consciously seek to integrate, regulate, mobilize and empower informal policing outfits that are willing to preserve law and order in an acceptable manner. As this study has demonstrated, informal security groups offer very rare opportunity for grass-roots mobilization and involvement in the current counter- terror war. Thus rather than treat these groups as villains, as is currently the case, the government, through the police, should painstakingly identify, recognize, organize and supervise credible ones to ensure that they operate within set parameters. This demands that the government should take practical steps to amend or review extant aspects of the Nigerian laws in a manner that allows both the formal and the informal policing groups to function together to provide security for the people of Nigeria

One of the allegations against community based policing groups is their tendency to take laws into their own hands by maltreating their suspects. This is largely because most of them have limited knowledge and training on basic issues of human rights and rule of law. It is, therefore, important that these people be exposed to the rudiments of rule of law and defaulters held accountable for their excesses. This training should also include strategies of crime prevention and detection, patrol strategies, surveillance and arrest of suspects.

There is also the need to improve the public image of the police to win the trust of all including members of the community crime control groups. If the two (formal and informal police) must work together, then there must be trust between them. Therefore, everything should be done to improve the poor perceptions of these groups about each other.

The introduction of certain incentives or rewards for community crime control groups that play by the rule will help in motivating them for better performance, and should be seriously considered. Such incentives may include improved provision of operational equipment, such as raincoats, booths, touches, uniforms and improved remuneration.

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