

# Multi-Level Policing Structure and National Security in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

The security architecture of Nigeria is enmeshed in a plethora of challenges due to the proliferation of weapons, organised banditry, assassinations, abduction and robbery attacks. These have been linked to cross-border crimes and internal socio-economic contradictions. Suffice it to say only a few studies have interrogated these security challenges from the perspective of multi-level policing structure. Thus, this study seeks to address this gap by examining how multi-level policing could impact positively Nigeria's national security. To accomplish this task, the study utilizes both the primary and secondary methods of data collection by interviewing relevant stakeholders in the Nigeria's security sector, such as senior and intermediate police officers, military and paramilitary officers. Consequently, the NVivo software program is used to organize, analyze, and visualize qualitative data. After a critical analysis of literatures, reports and data, the findings reveals among others, that Nigeria's daunting security challenges are drawbacks of the nation's current over-centralized policing structure, which is compounded by inadequate governmental support and funding; that the proposed multi-level policing structure if effectively implemented has the potential to bring security closer to the people at the grassroots, thereby, engendering national security. The paper recommends inter alia the adoption of a decentralized policing structure through appropriate legal and constitutional reforms; the creation of state police for effective policing of the entire country; effective crime investigation, prosecution and above all intelligence gathering as a way of nipping in the bud any potential crime. Through these, we believe effective policing of the entire country would be enhanced, and the incidence of crimes would reduce, which in turn would engender national security.

**Keywords:** Multi-level Policing, Structure, National Security

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## Introduction

The Nigerian defence and security architecture are currently facing unprecedented security challenges because of the proliferation of weapons, various crimes and violence (David & Salifu, 2020). The etymology of insecurity from a statist-oriented perspective could be dualistic - external and internal. Cross-border crime is a contributing external factor to the security issues faced by some African states, and it is further exacerbated by state conflicts within the continent, including other factors like international terrorism and activities of non-state actors (Cline, 2020; Ebo, 2007; Abdullahi & Gawi, 2021). Nigeria, a West African country, faces security issues due to widespread, systemic, and leadership failure in its three bordering states. However, Nigeria's large population and vast ungoverned territory make it difficult to enforce security due to its porous borders and vast ungoverned territory (Ogunsusi & Adeleke, 2021). From within, the Northern region's insurgency, such as the Boko-Haram; the Niger Delta's vandalism, kidnappings, robberies, and vicious attacks by herders throughout the country are the major indicators of Nigeria's growing insecurity (Douglas et al., 2004; Adegoke, 2020). Scholars have revealed that insecurity in Nigeria is also caused by socioeconomic factors such as poverty, poor income, widespread unemployment, a high degree of distrust in the political leadership, loss of hope and confidence in the future, brain drain, and unfavourable working conditions for professionals (Vambe, 2016; Agunbiade, 2024). Recent studies have revealed that there is an increasing rate of kidnappings, robberies, and killings at the grassroots in Nigeria (Ishaya et al., 2019; Adeyemi et al., 2021). Yet, these studies have only linked the root causes and triggers of these challenges to socioeconomic conditions in the country, with little or no consideration for the structural inadequacies of policing institutional architecture. To bridge the gap in the literature, ten Nigeria Police Force officials—including members of the armed forces and paramilitary groups—as well as representatives of the press, civil society organisations, local community administration, and academia with in-depth knowledge of community policing and national security in Nigeria were interviewed, selected across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The study applies the Social Contract theory to comprehensively examine how policing impacts Nigerian security architecture and the day-to-day life of citizens in Nigeria. The fundamental duty of a state is to ensure the security and welfare of its citizens. As cited in Agunbiade (2024: 168), "Chapter II (Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy), Section 14 (2)(b) of the Nigerian 1999

Constitution (as amended) states that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of the government (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003: 30)". Security is life itself. Without effective security in a country, life is at risk, and development or growth cannot occur therein. It must be emphasised that one of the most essential components of any nation's overall security system is its police force. The capability and functionality of the security architecture in any country is undermined when policing is restricted and manacled, which can have disastrous results. Therefore, this paper examines the effectiveness of the current centralised policing structure and the alternative model of multilevel policing to understand the complex issues facing enforcement initiatives, including potential areas for development.

## Literature Review

From a statist-oriented perspective, security refers to the protection of a country and its people. As cited in Abiodun et al., (2015:17) "Security ... implies the protection of the people or citizens from internal and external attacks or internal distress, which includes unemployment, hunger, starvation, diseases, ignorance, homelessness, environmental degradation and pollution (Achumba, Ighomercho, Akpor-Robaro, 2013)".

Security is guaranteed in an environment where citizens or people go about their daily activities without worrying about losing anything or getting hurt. In other words, it simply denotes the assurance of protection from danger or getting hurt. Every state prioritises security, investing huge capital investment in the security. Nigeria, on an annual basis, invests hugely in the security sector. According to the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (2024), "The Defence budget for 2024 is N1.647 trillion, about 5.7 % of the entire 2024 budget. Similarly, in 2021, N455 billion was budgeted for the Police, N559 billion in 2022 and N838 billion in 2023. In 2024, the Police budget stands at N969.6 billion". The Police Force is an important institutional stakeholder driving the security architecture in Nigeria. Despite this humongous amount of money budgeted for security and policing in Nigeria, the national security architecture has been undermined by the prevalence of crimes and insecurity in the country. Ironically, Nigeria is beset by a plethora of security threats that take the form of daylight killings, abduction of school children in their schools, kidnap of passengers on the highways, and farmers being butchered on their farms. Ugwuozor et al. (2022: 28) note that "countless number of innocent civilians helplessly lose their lives at virtually all places: roads, schools, offices, homes and even churches and mosques in Nigeria, while the Nigerian state seems rather incapacitated in the face of the security challenge". The Nigeria state is divided into six geopolitical zones, and various shades of insecurity currently bedevil each of these zones. The Southeast suffers from secessionist threats, which have been tagged as terrorism by the Federal Government of Nigeria. For example, "some Biafrans (a secessionist group) were taken away and killed in cold blood without trial at the time of September 2017 operation's Python Dance by the military, and they have not been buried till now. The Nigerian federal government has gone ahead to proscribe IPOB and designated them a terrorist group through a court judgment" (Chukwudi et al., 2019: 180). Militancy threatens the South-South region of Nigeria. As posited by (Douglas et al., 2004: 2-3), "Niger Delta – the geographical heart of oil production in Nigeria – as a breeding ground for militant and impoverished ethnic groups for whom terrorist acts (abduction, hostage taking, kidnapping and extrajudicial killings) were legion". In the Southwest, farmers-herders clash as well as kidnapping and ritual killings are commonplace. Over the past ten years, tensions between Fulani herders and sedentary farmers have increased, posing a danger to Nigerian security and leading to violent fighting in the country's southwestern region (Ogunsusi & Adeleke, 2021). The three geopolitical zones in Northern Nigeria (North-Central, North-East and North-West) are not left out as they are constantly under the attacks of terrorist groups and banditry, resulting in deaths and displacement of citizens (Abiodun et al., 2015; Abdullahi & Gawi, 2021). These security challenges have been linked to the inadequacies of the over centralized policing system in Nigeria. Hence, there have been clamours for a decentralised multi-level policing system to reinvigorate national security in Nigeria (Wahab, 2021). This paper explores the debate on multi-level policing and national security in Nigeria further with the aim of providing a deeper understanding of these two concepts.

## National Security in Nigeria

The concept of security is embedded in the state of being safe. Bringing this to a national pedestal denotes the state of securing a nation from internal or external aggression in the forms of crimes and other variants of insecurity. According to Abiodun et al. (2020: 17) "Security is ...the condition of feeling safe in a state, the protection and preservation of core values and the absence of threats to the existing values. The concept amounts to freedom from danger or threats and a country's ability to protect and develop itself and also promote its cherished values and legitimate interests". In a similar view, Ishaya et al. (2019: 52) Note that "national security is concerned with ensuring state legal codes are not transgressed, and prevention of attacks on public

infrastructures and their personnel by implementing civil defence and emergency preparedness measures, ensuring the resilience and redundancy of critical infrastructure”. Security architecture is based on the legal system, citizens' services, and the Constitution. David & Salifu (2020:172) note that “a nation's security architecture comprises the totality of its constitutional and legal framework and institutions that form and provide safety and security services for its citizens and the defence of its territorial integrity”. The security architecture of a country is compartmentalised into different forms. As cited in Abiodun et al., (2020: 17), “The various forms of national security include political security, economic security, energy and natural resources security, homeland security, cyber security, human security, and environmental security, respectively (Abiodun, Oladejo, Adetunberu, and Nwannenaya 2019)”. According to David & Salifu (2020: 172), Nigeria's security framework includes:

*The management of national security in Nigeria is exclusively conferred on the President, the chief executive, and the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The Nigerian national security architecture, however, operates at two levels - external and internal security. Principally, internal security responsibilities are vested in the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS), the Nigerian Customs Service, the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCS), Nigerian Fire Service (NFS), the State Security Service (SSS) also called Department of State Security (DSS) and the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) (Mbachu 2011a). Ultimately, addressing and securing the state from external threats is fundamentally the responsibility of the Nigeria Armed Forces under the Ministry of Defence (MoD). The agencies under the Ministry of Defence comprise the Defence Headquarters (DHQ), the Nigerian Army (NA), the Nigerian Navy (NN), the Nigerian Air Force (NAF), and the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA). The Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) oversees the DIA and NIA (Mbachu, 2011b).*

The success of any national security architecture is contingent upon a democratically driven system of governance. Meanwhile, the centralized organizational structure of the police in Nigeria portends a challenge when it comes to making swift decisions regarding the changing security threats in Nigeria, resulting in a negative public perception of the inability of the police to provide sufficient protection. (Bakare & Aderinola, 2019). The negative public perception can be linked to the country's weak security architecture owing to the high waves of crime, particularly at the grassroots level. Crimes in Nigeria have multi-layer challenges that are more prevalent at the grassroots level. Ironically, the centralised approach of the federal government has not effectively addressed armed banditry and other criminal activities owing to the absence of a policing structure within the security jurisdiction of autonomous sub-national units in Nigeria, which has led to increased killings, abductions and armed robbery attacks. (Adegoke, 2020).

### **Multi-Level Policing in Nigeria**

Policing, in its simplest form, refers to crime fighting and prevention. Eze (2014: 166) Opines that “policing in contemporary political systems has undergone remarkable changes. Advanced democracies have evolved a police system that cuts across the federal, state and local units. The state form of police and policing is regarded as an indispensable feature of a federal system of governance. It allows its constituent units the constitutional right to provide security for the lives and property of people within the state”.

The police are a legally established, equipped, funded, and structured professional body tasked with enforcing the law. They confront and repress actions that jeopardize the social order. They address societal injustices that arise from riots, protests, and trade disputes. Hence, they also perform conflict resolution obligations (Nwolise, 2019; David & Salifu, 2020). The police are regarded as the agency of the state committed to security service operations, which are primarily tasked with the protection of lives and properties through law enforcement, crime investigation and the making of arrests when necessary, and upholding civic order, among others (Ezeji, 2020). Policing duties include both the prevention of crimes and the protection of citizens within their control or jurisdiction. In the context of Nigeria, policing is the sole duty of the national government (Ojewale, 2023). The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria specifically outlines the duties of the Nigeria Police Force. As cited in David & Salifu (2020: 174), “the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended, principally outlined the constitutional duties of the Nigeria Police Force. By virtue of sections 215(3) and (4) of the Constitution, the Nigeria Police Force shall maintain and secure public safety and public order, ensure internal stability, and prevent threats to national security.” However, the centralised nature of the policing structure in Nigeria makes it more difficult for them to respond quickly to threats in the local areas, which

negatively affects public opinion and undermines public faith in their ability to ensure effective public safety. (Bakare & Aderinola, 2019). Consequently, there have been calls to decentralise policing - borne out of the citizens' security concerns at the grassroots. (Wahab, 2021). The argument here is that since Nigeria is a federal state, the policing structure should also reflect the federal structure and be decentralized. Beyond the federal government, state governments should also be given the responsibility of playing complementary roles in funding or creating their distinctive policing structure to make more sense of Nigeria's institutional policing efforts to strengthen the security architecture in the country. (Nwogwugwu & Odedina, 2018). In other words, multi-level policing in Nigeria holds that the responsibility of policing Nigeria's definite geography should not be exclusively that of the federal government but also that of the state. (Eze, 2014). Indeed, a multi-level policing system could be required for better crime prevention and prosecution efforts, given the peculiarities of Nigeria's federalist state and the country's growing security concerns. The multi-level policing structure resonates well with the model obtainable in other federalist states such as the USA and Canada.

### **Theoretical Underpinning**

This paper anchors on the theory of social contract to explain the emergence of the police force as an agency of the Nigerian state, commissioned by the Nigerian government through the constitution to protect and safeguard the citizens. The social contract theory is traceable to Thomas Hobbes. (Seabright et al., 2021). Hobbes argues, as noted in Abiodun et al. (2020: 17), that "only the state has the wherewithal to guarantee defence, security and prevent the society from anarchy, though its government is deemed fit to have provided adequate security". The Hobbesian social contract theory emphasises the fundamental duty of the state, given its capacity to secure and protect its citizens. In contrast, the absence of a state presupposes statelessness, lawlessness and anarchy. (Seabright et al., 2021).

Every human society is susceptible to violence, conflicts and crimes. Hence, people invent an authority or institution that empowers them to provide leadership and protect them from internal and external aggression. This was why (Korn et al., 2020: 14890), argued that "social contract results from the moral obligation to protect vulnerable others". The government of Nigeria is a product of the citizens' political decisions. The periodic elections through which the political leaders of the country have emerged in the post-military fourth republic to date is a practical illustration of a social contract. Through the statist-informed governmental institution like the police force, the federal government of Nigeria, in turn, as a matter of responsibility, performs its duty of protecting the citizenry. However, the recurring dilemma of insecurity has shown that the Nigerian state has become vulnerable to dangerous forms of insecurity, such as abductions, killings, violent conflicts and armed robbery attacks, resulting in fears among the citizens and a lack of trust in the government's approach to protecting the people. (Ogunsusi & Adeleke, 2021).

Because of the failure of the Nigerian federal government to keep up with its security obligations of the contract, other sub-national governments, specifically the state governments, have called for a paradigm shift from the hitherto existing mono-level and over-centralized to a more decentralised multi-level policing structure. (Nwogwugwu & Odedina, 2018). For example, the former Governor of Rivers State, Hon Rotimi Amaechi, during a meeting of the governors in Nigeria, called for the amendment of the constitution to allow state police. As cited in Eze (2014: 170), "Specifically, the Governors sought the amendment of Section 214 of the constitution that would prohibit State Commissioners of Police from taking orders from the Inspector-General of Police and instead, receive instructions from the state governors" (This Day, Monday 6, August 2012)". Lending credence to this, the immediate past Governor of Ekiti State, Dr John Kayode Fayemi, who was also the Chairman of Nigeria's Governors' Forum, succinctly opines that "multi-level policing, which would give birth to state police, is an idea that nothing can stop even if it is delayed now... I don't know of any state governor who is not in support of policing being devolved to local levels. There must be multi-level policing. It is an idea whose time has come." (Wahab, 2021). According to the last Nigerian Governors' Forum chairman, the only realistic solution to the myriads of increasing security challenges in Nigeria is to devolve policing to the various autonomous units, including the state and local levels. This will enhance citizens' safety and, at the same time or in return, engender citizens' trust in Nigeria's government, particularly the police force.

### **Methodology**

The goal of qualitative research is to understand and identify the reasoning behind what individuals or organisations identify as a social or human issue; in other words, it seeks to explain the "how" and "why" of a phenomenon by probing specific questions and applying established methodologies (Creswell & Creswell, 2007).

The purposive and snowballing sampling methods were adopted to grapple with the participants in the study. In-depth interviews and semi-structured online surveys were also the qualitative research instruments used in this study. Specifically, the in-depth interviews were deployed to elicit data regarding the inherent drawbacks of Nigeria's policing structure as they impact the country's security architecture and how the challenges could be addressed. The participants who responded to the in-depth interviews were selected among the senior and intermediate officers working with the Nigeria Police Force, including the military and paramilitary agencies from the six geopolitical regions of Nigeria, i.e. North-East, North-Central, North-West, South-East, South-South and South-West, to give the research findings a comprehensive outlook. The data obtained from each of the six participants for in-depth interviews were coded as B1, B2, B3, B4, B5 & B6 classified as Security Institutional Actors (SIA). The in-depth interviews were conducted inside a police station, spending between 30 and 35 minutes. Meanwhile, the qualitative semi-structured online survey, designed with Google Form, was administered by four major respondents classified as Non-Security Institutional Stakeholders (NSIS) consisting of the representatives of the press, civil society organisations, local communities' administration and academia with deep knowledge of community policing and national security in Nigeria. The data generated from their opinions were coded as S1, S2, S3 & S4, which comprehensively engaged with the research aims and provided more insights into the subject of policing and security in Nigeria. The breakdown of the 10 participants comprising the Security Institutional Actors (SIA) and Non-Security Institutional Stakeholders (NSIS) is coded with a unique participants' identification, presented in a demographic table below:

**Table 1. Summary of Participants' Information**

PARTICIPANTS' ID	AGE RANGE	GENDER	CAREER STATUS	GEOPOLITICAL ZONE
1: SIA-B1	30-35	MALE	SENIOR	SOUTH-WEST
2: SIA-B2	35-45	FEMALE	INTERMEDIATE	SOUTH-WEST
3: SIA-B3	35-45	MALE	SENIOR	SOUTH-SOUTH
4: SIA-B4	ABOVE 50	MALE	SENIOR	NORTH-WEST
5: SIA-B5	30-35	MALE	SENIOR	NORTH-CENTRAL
6: SIA-B6	30-35	FEMALE	INTERMEDIATE	NORTH-CENTRAL
7: NSIS-S1	35-45	MALE	SENIOR	NORTH-EAST
8: NSIS-S2	35-45	MALE	INTERMEDIATE	SOUTH-EAST
9: NSIS-S3	ABOVE 50	FEMALE	SENIOR	SOUTH-SOUTH
10: NSIS-S4	30-35	FEMALE	SENIOR	NORTH-EAST

#### **Demographic Information of Participants - Generated by NVivo version 14**

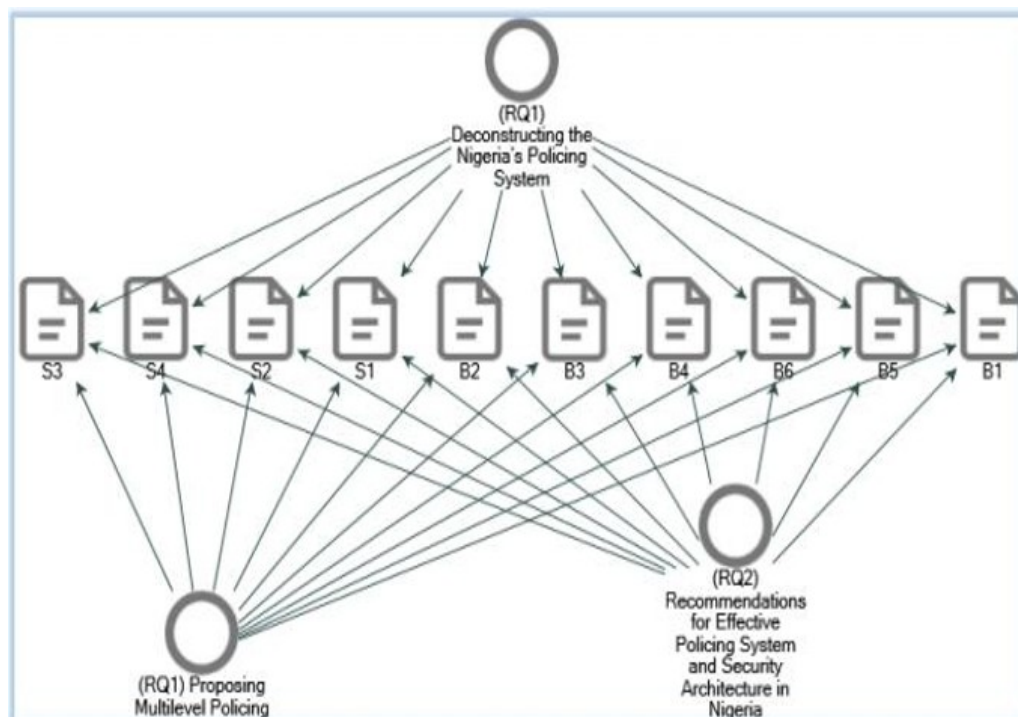
The data sets that emerged from the interviews and online surveys were analysed using thematic analysis based on descriptive phenomenology. (Sundler et al., 2019). NVivo was adopted as the primary analytical tool to codify, categorise and visualise the data. These techniques include categorising, assessing, identifying, and presenting significant themes from the data sets. (Salahudin, Nurmandi & Loilatu, 2020). The data sets that emerged from the NVivo were triangulated using documentary reviews of relevant literature to arrive at the study's findings, which eventually translated into the final recommendations.

#### **Results and Data Presentation**

The analysis of data from the study, using NVivo software (version 14), gave birth to some major themes and sub-themes, which include **Deconstructing Nigeria's Policing System** with sub-themes such as - *Challenges of the Current Centralized Policing Structure and Possible Impacts of Multi-level Policing on Nigeria's Security Architecture*; **Proposing Multi-level Policing** with sub-themes like *Potential Challenges and Potential Benefits*; and **Recommendations for Effective Policing System and Security Architecture in Nigeria** with sub-themes such as *Decentralized Policing Structure*; *Creation of State Police*; and *Good Governance*. As demonstrated in the project map from NVivo and further described below, these themes and sub-themes from the analysis aligned with the data and opinions of participants who answered the interviews and online survey.



**Figure 1.1: Cluster of Main Themes and Sub-Themes Intersecting Participants' Folders**

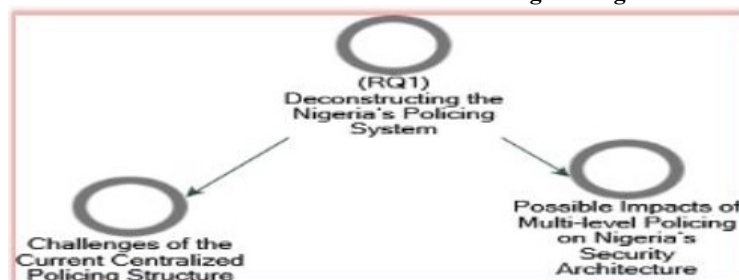


**Figure 1. 1: Project Map showing the intersection of the Themes and the participants - B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, B6, S1, S2, S3, S4 (generated by Nvivo version 14).**

### **Theme One: Deconstructing the Nigeria's Policing System**

Under the first theme, the data analysis examines the structural and systemic encumbrances mitigating the prospects of Nigeria's policing system. The analysis also reviewed the current centralised policing structure and explored its potential impacts on Nigeria's security architecture. Arising from the analysis, two sub-themes emerged - (i) Challenges of the Current Centralized Policing Structure and (ii) Possible Impacts of Multi-level Policing on Nigeria's Security Architecture, presented in the project map below:

**Figure 1.2: Main Theme and Sub-Themes: Deconstructing the Nigeria's Policing System**



(Generated by NVivo Version 14).

#### **i.) Sub-theme One: Challenges of the Current Centralized Policing Structure**

When we asked the participants to share their real-world perspectives on the overall challenges of Nigeria's current centralised police structure, some participants in the category of the Security Institutional Actors (SIA) and Non-Security Institutional Stakeholders (NSIS) noted that:

*Crime patterns change with time, hence making policing more complicated. The policing structure and strategy also need to change in Nigeria (SIA-B2).*

*Inadequate and ineffective, thereby not delivering adequate security (SIA-B4)*

*There's a disconnect between the top and the grassroots where the issues are prevalent... (NSIS-S1)*

*The policing system is dysfunctional because of its over-centralized nature, operating under a weak and corrupt governmental system coupled with a poor criminal justice system. The current centralised policing structure in Nigeria is characterised by a top-down approach where the federal government exerts primary control over law enforcement, often leading to slower response times and a disconnect from local security needs (NSIS-S2).*

*Its performance at the state and local government levels has been subpar, especially when it comes to the police response to more sophisticated crimes like kidnapping and daylight killings of citizens, which have become rampant nowadays (NSIS-S4).*

From the opinions provided by participants, it was revealed that the patterns of perpetrating crimes in Nigeria are changing, which is complicating policing and demanding that crime prevention and crime control strategies should also change. Meanwhile, the police institutional drawbacks in its crime-prevention and crime-fighting efforts—from the national to the local—were revealed from the opinions of most of the participants, affirming that the current centralised policing model in Nigeria is ineffective and impaired by other major challenges as shown in the world cloud's components below:

**Figure 1.3: Challenges of the Current Centralized Policing Structure in Nigeria**



**Word Cloud generated by NVivo version 14**

The second sub-theme that resulted from the analysis of the participants' opinions under this theme focuses on the potential impacts of multi-level policing. Describing multi-level policing, the participants - Security Institutional Actors (SIA) and Non-Security Institutional Stakeholders (NSIS) noted the following:

*It's a policing strategy that considers decentralising security and law enforcement from the federal to the state and down to the community (SIA-B3).*

*It is fit for use and purpose for a federal state like Nigeria...it is highly desirable (SIA-B4).*

*Multi-level policing is the decentralisation of security architecture by bringing security responsibilities closer to every citizen, i.e. from federal to local government (NSIS-S3).*

*Multi-level policing in Nigeria involves a collaborative framework where federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies operate at different jurisdictional levels to maintain law and order, addressing both general and region-specific security issues (NSIS-S4).*

These statements showed that most of the participants see multi-level policing as a triad of policing institutions that is not limited to the federal level alone but also replicated at the state and local government levels to maintain law and order. Aside from this, they also offered their expert opinions on the possible impacts of multi-level policing on the security architecture of Nigeria, as below:

*It encourages the policing process and administration closer to the people (SIA-B1)*

*To a great extent..., each level of authority will have control of its forces to maintain law and order without having to rely on the inadequate federal police that has been found to be grossly ineffective. It could also enhance effective community policing and intelligence gathering at the grassroots (SIA-B3)*

*Multi-level policing ....brings people with diverse knowledge to contribute to achieving national security objectives(SIA-B6)*

*Multi-level policing is normal in a society where each institution functions to supplement and complement one another across the tiers of government from the federal, state, and local government levels. This will be positively impactful because it will make coordination easy across all levels of government, and this will make our collective efforts more effective to achieve the goal of National security and defence in Nigeria (NSIS-S1)*

*It will enhance better understanding of the actors in the security sector as well as their roles and how to assist each other towards achieving defence of the state and local governments - (NSIS - S2)*

*It would reduce the too much paperwork and reduce criminal boldness to commit crimes because it would be easy to use locals who can conveniently identify....criminals (NSIS - S3)*

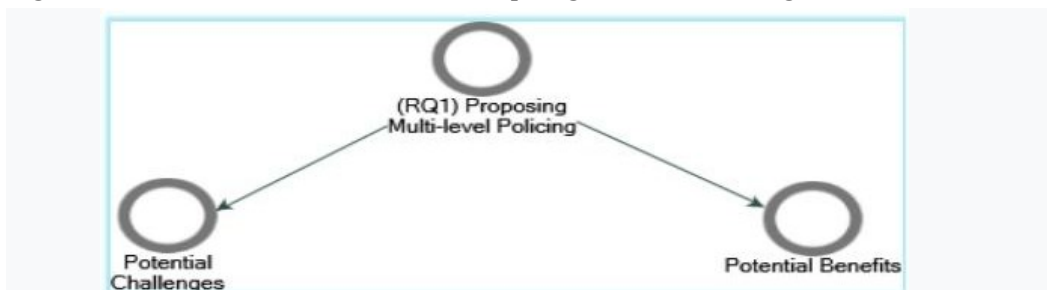
*Multi-level policing can enhance Nigeria's security architecture by enabling localised responses..., and fostering better coordination and cooperation among federal, state, and local agencies (NSIS - S4)*

Summarily, the participants are of the opinion that multi-level policing in Nigeria would encourage prompt and effective responses to crime and impact improved security architecture at the grassroots.

## Theme Two: Proposing Multi-level Policing

The second theme suggested multi-level policing as a possible replacement for the current centralised policing system in Nigeria. Meanwhile, attempts were also undertaken to examine and compare the advantages and disadvantages of the suggested decentralised pattern of policing. Hence, the sub-themes are (i) potential challenges and (ii) potential benefits, as presented in the project map below:

**Figure 1.4: Main Theme and Sub-Themes: Proposing Multi-level Policing**



(Generated by Nvivo Version 14).

### i.) Sub-theme One: Potential Challenges

The participants provided their expert opinions in response to questions regarding the potential drawbacks of the proposed policing model. Together, these responses gave rise to a comprehensive challenge of the model if



adopted, particularly regarding the institutional capacity, daily operations, functions and end-to-end outcomes. Below are the opinions of the participants (SIA & NSIS)

*....the likely challenges, it could be abused by politicians to settle political issues, inadequate funding, and clashes with the federal police (SIA-B3).*

*The challenge includes initial funding and perceived state executive control and abuse (SIA-B4).*

*The potential challenges are political influence, lack of funds, Inter-level police rivalry and disintegration of the country (NSIS-S1).*

*If not properly handled, it could be hijacked, abused and misused by state governors (NSIS-S2).*

*Challenges may involve coordination complexities between different levels of law enforcement and the risk of uneven resource distribution and capacity among regions (NSIS-S3).*

The opinions represent the potential challenges of a multi-level law enforcement or policing system. Among the concerns that the participants clearly voiced was the possibility of abuse by politicians and state governors who could utilise the institution under their control to further their agendas. It was also noted that state and local governments might not have sufficient finances to support the maintenance of a policing infrastructure within their respective jurisdictions. The adoption of multi-level policing, according to the participants, may also lead to tensions between the federal and state police, which might cause the nation's security to fall apart. All of these difficulties are demonstrated by the words that have been crystallised in the word cloud below:

**Figure 1.5: Challenges of the Current Centralized Policing Structure in Nigeria**



(Generated by Nvivo Version 14).

#### **ii.) Sub-theme Two: Potential Benefits:**

The second sub-theme of the proposed multi-level policing includes the potential gains and benefits. On this, the following opinions were made by the participants - both the SIA and NSIS:

*....it helps take security to the local level (SIA-B1)*

*...criminality would effectively be addressed at the grassroots because the bulk of the personnel are drawn from the Indigenous peoples from the localities in the grassroots (SIA-B3)*

*Benefits include wider reach and easy Identification of suspects (SIA-B4)*

*The potential benefits of the proposed multilevel policing structure in Nigeria include improved responsiveness to local security issues and enhanced community engagement (NSIS-S3).*

Aside from facilitating wider reach, ease of identifying suspects and bringing security closer to the people, insights were drawn from the data analysis on the other advantages of the multi-level model of policing, particularly in the contexts of administration and operations in the country, as highlighted and stated below:

*Multi-level policing would encourage localised involvement in policing administration. It ensures better administration and assures better operational coordination (SLA-B2).*

*..employment opportunities and reduced administrative bottlenecks in the chain of command (NSIS-S1).*

*It will enhance operational efficiency as there will be a division of labour (NSIS-S2).*

*Effective implementation will require robust communication channels and strategies to mitigate these challenges and ensure cohesive operations across all policing levels (NSIS-S4).*

From these opinions, multi-level policing tends to improve administration, reduce administrative bottlenecks, enhance operational efficiency, provide employment opportunities, and enhance robust communication channels and strategies within the broader scope of police institutions.

**Theme Three: Recommendations for Effective Policing System and Security Architecture in Nigeria** The third theme elicited the recommendations for an effective policing system and security architecture in Nigeria. Through the analysis, three sub-themes emerged, which included Decentralized Policing Structure, Creation of State Police, and Good Governance, as illuminated in the project map below:

**Figure 1.6: Main Theme and Sub-Themes: Decentralized Policing Structure; Creation of State Police; and Good Governance**



(Generated by Nvivo Version 14).

#### **i.) Sub-theme One: Decentralized Policing Structure**

The first sub-theme regarding how best to improve Nigeria's policing system and security architecture, as obtained from the expert opinions of the participants, is to enact or approve a decentralised policing structure. On this, these are what the participants have to say:

*There is a need to decentralise policing structure for effective community policing .... (SLA-B2).*

*The police institution should be decentralised (NSIS-S2).*

*Implement a multilevel structure to allow for more localised and responsive law enforcement (NSIS-S3).*

The recommendations of the participants suggested that a decentralised policing structure is crucial for effective community policing and that it can enhance effective multi-level responsive law enforcement.

#### **ii.) Sub-theme One: Creation of State Police**

Beyond the decentralisation of the police structure, the second sub-theme that emerged is the creation of state police. The opinions of the participants on this sub-theme are illustrated below:

*States should have their policing structure (SLA-B1)*

*.....create state police (SLA-B4).*

*There is a need to create state police. The State institution should have its own police who should be allowed to work independently without political influence (NSIS-S1)*

*Let the government approve state policing (NSIS-S2).*

The bottom line of these opinions is that the various 36 states should be allowed to establish their policing structure, which should be allowed to operate independently without political influence.

### **iii.) Sub-theme One: Good Governance and Effective Institutional Administration**

The final sub-theme that emerged in the analysis on how to improve policing and security architecture in Nigeria includes good governance and effective institutional administration, as highlighted below:

*The government should provide states with funding to sustain their respective security units (SIA-*

*B2)...adequate training, funding, discipline and appropriate sanction of erring officers (SIA-B3).*

*Increasing the remuneration of security officials encourages joint training by security agencies (SIA-B5).*

*....prioritize good governance and rule of law; provide state-of-the-art equipment; training and retraining for capacity building; punishment and reward system; good condition of service ((SIA-B6).*

*There is a need for training and capacity building via training programs to improve the skills and professionalism of police officers across all levels. Community engagement should be encouraged to foster stronger ties between law enforcement and local communities for trust-building and cooperation. Importantly, there is a need for equitable distribution of resources, including funding, equipment, and more personnel, to all regions—Technology Integration. Also, we should invest in modern technology and data-driven approaches to improve crime detection, prevention, and response (NSIS-S4).*

The above quotes were extracted from the participants' recommended statements regarding policies and actions that can enhance effective policing and security architecture in Nigeria.

### **Discussions and Recommendations**

First, findings from the analysis of data revealed that Nigeria's centralised policing strategies toward crime fighting and prevention are lacking, particularly in the area of protecting the lives and properties of Nigerian citizens, many of whom have fallen to terrorist attacks, banditry, burglary, highway robbery and broad daylight killings, particularly at the state and local government levels; thereby lacking in its responsibilities as the foremost security agency of the Nigerian state particularly in the context of crime-fighting, crime-prevention and community policing. Importantly, it was revealed that there is a changing pattern of crimes being perpetrated in Nigeria. Corroborating this, Nwanmereni (2022) Notes that there are new sophisticated ways of carrying out attacks against locals - tourists, farmers, places of worship, marketplaces, schools, and other public areas in Nigeria, which manifest through the terror of Boko Haram militants, bandits, herders, kidnappers, cultists and armed robbers. Hence, there is a need to deploy sophisticated policing counter strategies to address crimes and other security challenges, particularly in the local municipalities in Nigeria. Beyond this, the paper also traces these crimes and security challenges to the over-centralized policing structure, which operates under a weak institution, corrupt government and poor criminal justice system, which altogether undermines the capacity of the policing system and security architecture in Nigeria. David & Salifu (2020: 177) assert that “the over-centralization of Nigerian security architecture has profoundly crippled rapid responses to security tensions across the country”. The opinions of participants revealed that the Nigerian Police Force was a product of the colonial administration in Nigeria. Lending credence to this notion, a scholar opines that “the Nigeria Police Force came into existence in 1861. In order to effectively entrench its rule and control the people and resources of the colonized, the British had to create the formal police of 30 men Consular Guard.” (Eze, 2014: 166). However, it was however revealed that “after many decades since Nigeria became a sovereign political entity, the country’s security architecture remains centralised structurally, with damning consequences for the management of crime and insecurity at the grassroots.” (David & Salifu, 2020: 178). The findings simply suggest that the over centralised structure needs to be reviewed to make it more effective, and demand the embrace of a new alternative such as multi-level policing.

Multi-level policing is conceived, according to the findings, as a decentralised triadic policing structure, with each unit of the triad operating within each tier and jurisdiction of government (Federal, State and Local) to maintain law and order as well as carry out other duties as stipulated by the constitution and extant regulations or laws establishing the Nigeria Police Force in Nigeria. Part III (B), Section 214 (1) of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides that “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 police force shall be established for the Federation or any part thereof” (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Egunjobi (2016) as cited in David & Salifu (2020: 183) conceptualises state police as “a kind of sub-national police formation, which is established, organised, and maintained, under the direct control and jurisdiction of a particular state (sub-national unit) of government”. In terms of the duties of the Nigeria police, “Section (4) of the Nigeria Police Act states that [T]he police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of crime, the apprehension of offenders, the preservation of the law and order, the protection of property and the enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged and shall perform such military duties within or without Nigeria as may be requested of them by or under the authority of this or under any Act” (cited in Madubuike-Ekwe & Obayemi, 2019: 8). Beyond the conception of multi-level policing in the context of the mandate and constitutional duties of the Nigerian police, findings from the analysis of data sets reveals that multi-level policing could impact prompt and effective responses to crime and improve security at the grassroots; advance coordination and cooperation among federal, state, and local security agencies; enhance better community policing and intelligence-gathering efforts; decrease stringent bureaucratic bottlenecks in communication chain; reduce criminal boldness at the grassroots and making Nigeria's security architecture more effective.

Meanwhile, some potential challenges and benefits of multi-level policing in Nigeria were also revealed from the findings from the analysis of data. In terms of the potential challenges, findings showed that multi-level policing could be abused by politicians and state governors who could utilise the institution under their control to further their agendas. Corroborating, former President Dr Goodluck Jonathan, Major-General Muhammadu Buhari (Rtd), former Inspector-General of Police Sunday Ehindero, former Inspector-General Mohammed Abubakar and Pat Utomi have argued that while state police may be theoretically appealing, it could be abused politically by politicians who could use it to witch-hunt political opponents and thereby impact negatively on the nation's democracy (Eze, 2014).

The issue of insufficient funding to maintain and power sub-national states' policing infrastructure across the 36 states of Nigeria's federation also emanated in the analysis as one of the challenges of multi-level policing. This revelation resonates with the assertions of some scholars Madubuike-Ekwe & Obayemi, 2019; Abiodun et al., 2020; Agunbiade, 2024; Chukwudi et al., 2019; David & Salifu, 2020) who altogether affirmed that there is poor funding of the entire policing framework, which has accounted for the logistic cum capacity deficits of the police institution and the poor welfare condition of police officials in Nigeria. The big question that accompanies this challenge of under-funding or poor funding of the police is, if the country cannot effectively fund the national police, how will the policing structure at the state and local government levels be funded? Also, the possibility of rivalry between the federal and state police (which might lead to the breakdown of national security) was the last potential challenge of multi-level policing in Nigeria, as revealed by the data analysis.

Adedeji (2012: 2) Affirms in the literature that “there is an opinion that suggests that state police will lead to a situation in which there will be two rivalling institutions of the same responsibility, duty and nature”. Beyond the challenges, the potential benefits of multi-level policing were equally enunciated by the analysis, which includes facilitating wider reach, ease of identifying suspects, bringing security closer to the people, encouraging localised approaches to policing, addressing crimes at the grassroots through a socioeconomic angle to administration and operational engagements of the police institution in the country. Other potential benefits include decentralised administration for effective operations, employment opportunities, unhindered communication channels and localised strategies to address national security challenges within the broader scope of the police and security architecture in Nigeria, as justified by Adedeji (2012); Madubuike-Ekwe & Obayemi (2019); Eze (2014); and Ojewale (2023).

### ***Recommendations***

To improve overall security architecture in order to address the sophisticated modern-day crimes in the context of making Nigeria safer and Nigerians safe, three recommendations, which include the need for a decentralised policing structure, the specific creation of state police, good governance and effective institutional administration are suggested as stated below:

### *Decentralized Policing Structure*

From the analysis of data, it is hereby recommended that there is the need for a departure from a centralised to a decentralised police institutional structure in Nigeria. Nwogwugwu & Odedina (2018: 342) opine that “since the current centralised system of security management in Nigeria has failed to effectively combat security challenges across the length and breadth of the country, there is a need for massive reform of the security sector to make the sector effective”. Lending credence to the above argument, Adedeji (2012: 8) notes that, “many believed that the federal government, which has exclusive power on police-related matters, is far removed from the component states, which are at the receiving ends of sophisticated crimes. This has revived the call for the decentralisation of the police force”. This, however, may require a new security architecture that would proactively counter all security threats at the municipal, state, and federal levels of the nation. In line with the findings, the implementation of a multilevel structure for effective community policing would engender localised, responsive law enforcement. According to Ikuteyijo (2009), as cited in (Nwogwugwu & Odedina, 2018: 341), “Community policing entails community partnership in creating a safe and secure environment for all. This brings about residents' ownership of the strategies adopted in securing their environment since they are involved in the decision-making process, including the design of the appropriate techniques and tactics to be adopted”. This resonates well with the thrusts, workings and operational functionalities of multi-level policing to reflect a cross-tier policing structure, particularly in a federalist nation like Nigeria.

### *Creation of State Police*

Decentralising policing doesn't mean the same thing as creating state police. The former represents the process of achieving the latter, while the latter embellished one of the major results of the former. David & Salifu, 2020: 183 notes that “State police do exist to enhance the decentralisation of the police force. The justification advanced in favour of state police is that it is in concert with the principle of federalism Nigeria claims to operate”. Meanwhile, the findings from the analysis of data suggests that the federal government should approve the proposed creation of state police, arguing that the 36 states of Nigeria should have their policing structure or their police working independently and strong enough to resist political abuse and self-seeking misuse of selfish politicians and state governors. Describing what is meant by state police, Nwogwugwu & Odedina (2018: 342) posits that “security at the state level should be controlled completely by the state governors, while the federal security apparatus will play a complementary role, especially where inter-state crimes are involved”. Regardless of the criticisms of the proposed state police in Nigeria, this paper validates the suggestion that a well-equipped state police force, as found in other federalist nations like the USA and Canada, is needed to reinvigorate Nigeria's security architecture. State police should be established to fight crimes with fresh energy, new strategies, and a sense of patriotism that puts the security of the citizens and their properties at risk. Importantly, Ad hoc committees approved by the state legislature, comprising retired judges, religious authorities, journalists, and labour union representatives, should be established by the state and local governments to mitigate the misuse of their authority. The police should also establish a Police Regulatory Board to provide checks and balances as well as standards of operation. (David & Salifu, 2020).

### *Good Governance and Effective Institutional Administration.*

Scholars such as Abiodun et al. (2020: 24) posit that bad leadership, lack of funding, and absence of good governance are factors undermining the capacity of police and security architecture in Nigeria. Agunbiade (2024: 178) also recommends that the “government should revamp the entire security apparatus by recruiting more and better-educated security officers, ensuring increased funding, better training, improving the logistics and welfare packages of officers and moving towards independent and community-based policing”. This corresponds with the findings from the analysis of data obtained from the participants who participated in the interviews and surveys. It was revealed according to findings that in order to achieve effective policing and security architecture in Nigeria, the government should provide adequate funding to the police and other security bodies across all states, provide sufficient capacity-building training for officers, prioritise officers' discipline through a reward system that acknowledges brave, patriotic, and well-behaved officers and sanction erring officers; increase the remuneration of police and other security officials; prioritise good governance; provide state-of-the-art equipment, particular technological tools for improved crime detection, prevention and response.

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