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Empirical Interrogation of the Prospects and Challenges of State Policing System in Nigeria

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Abstract

The rising wave of insecurity in Nigeria raises concerns about the effectiveness of the Nigerian Police Force, which operates under the federal government's authority, in addressing the country's security challenges. There is growing interest in whether decentralizing policing powers to the states could provide viable solutions for reducing insecurity. This study aims to explore the potential benefits and challenges of adopting a state policing system in Nigeria and to contribute to the ongoing discourse on security in a diverse nation like Nigeria. The research employed a hybrid methodology, combining both doctrinal and non-doctrinal approaches. Descriptive and analytical

methods were used to interpret empirical data collected from 1,051 randomly selected respondents through questionnaires, in order to assess the prospects and potential challenges of implementing state policing in Nigeria. The study found that the current centralized structure of the Nigerian Police Force is inadequate to ensure the security of Nigerians. Moreover, the analysis of empirical data suggests that state policing holds promise for effectively addressing insecurity in Nigeria. However, challenges such as corruption, insufficient funding, and others remain significant obstacles. The study concludes by recommending an amendment to Nigeria's current legal framework on policing to facilitate the decentralization of law enforcement.

Keywords

Policing, Insecurity, State Policing, Nigerian Police Force, Police and Security

Introduction

For over fifteen years, insecurity has posed a significant threat to Nigeria's unity and sustainable development.[1] However, this challenge is not exclusive to Nigeria; it affects nations across the globe, whether developed, developing, or underdeveloped.[2] While internal insecurity is a global issue, the key difference lies in how individual governments address and manage the situation.[3] In Nigeria, insecurity manifests in various forms, including kidnapping, banditry, ritual killings, armed robbery, Boko Haram insurgency, secessionist movements, and communal clashes.[4]

Nigeria comprises 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, grouped into geo-political zones: North Central, North East, North West, South East, South South, and South West. Unfortunately,

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[1]   Chukwu, J.C. & Udem, M.C. (2024). Crime, Violence, and Security Challenge in Nigeria: Implication on National Development Since 1960. Ohazurume: Unizik Journal of Culture and Civilization. 3(1), 44-58, 44
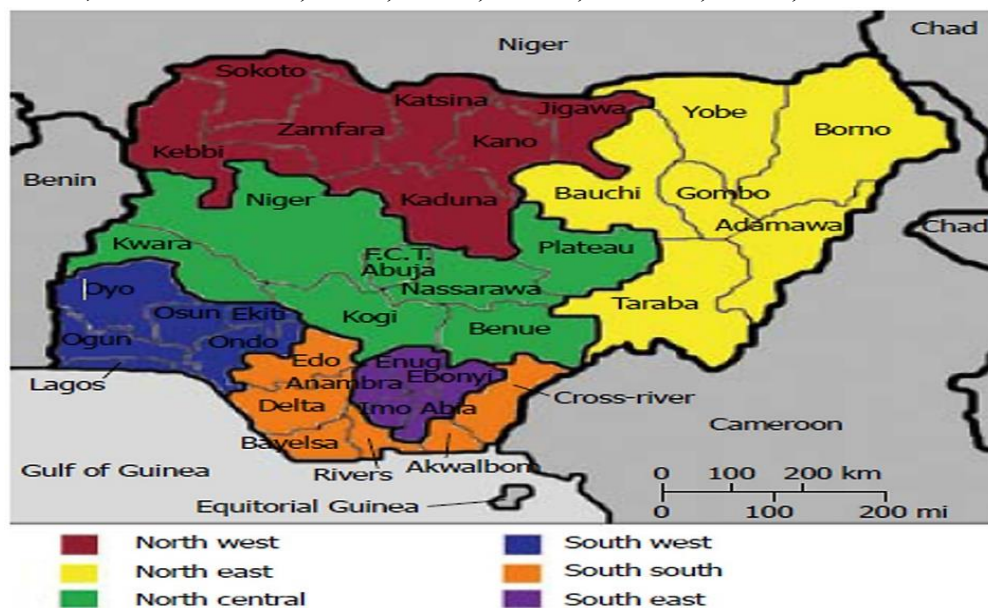
[2]   Sule, I.D. (2024). Policing Insecurity and Sustainable Development in Post-Colonial Nigeria. Jalingo Journal of African Studies

[3]   Adofun, I. & Alhassan, A. (2018). Insecurity and Economic Development in Nigeria. Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development. 9(18) 101-111, 101

[4]   Krokeyi, W.S. & Dadi, T. (2017). Insurgency and Socio-Political Economy of Nigeria. International Journal of Science and Research. 6(10) 1192-1196

insecurity affects all these regions.[5] The patterns of insecurity in Nigeria are largely regional. For instance, Boko Haram insurgency is concentrated in the North, particularly the North East.[6] Banditry and violent activities by armed herdsmen are prevalent in the South West, North Central, and North East. Kidnapping and attacks by unidentified armed groups affect the South West and South South, while ritual killings are rampant in the South West.[7] This widespread insecurity has significantly hindered Nigeria's socioeconomic growth over the past decade, obstructing development and stability across the country.[8]

Figure A: Map of Nigeria showing the six geo-political zones and the 36 states including the F.C.T. Abuja (**North west**-Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina, Jigawa, Kano, Kaduna; **North-East-**Yobe, Borno, Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa, Taraba, **North**

5   Adedotun, AF, Adesina, OS, Taiwo, AI, Odekina, OG, Adedotun, OA, and Adoghe, VO. (2024). A Non-Parametric Analysis of the Effect of Covid-19 Pandemic on Nigerians' Well-being Based on Geo-Political Zones. JP Journal of Biostatistics. 24(1) 177-196, 180

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Central-Kwara, Kogi, Benue, Niger, F.C.T. Abuja, Nasarawa, **South West-**Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ondo, Lagos, Ekiti; **South South-**Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Cross Rivers, Akwa Ibom; **South East-**Enugu, Ebonyi, Imo, Abia, Anambra (Adapted from Akinlua et al, 2015)

The Nigerian Police Force is the primary security agency constitutionally tasked with protecting lives and property across the country.[9] As Nigeria's diversity continues to grow, so does the need for an effective police force. However, the inability of the Nigerian Police, operating under the federal government's authority, to effectively combat insecurity has become evident through a significant rise in insecurity over the past decade.[10] The increasing insecurity across the country's geo-political zones, coupled with the federal government's failure to implement decisive measures, has prompted state governors in affected regions to establish independent security outfits to protect their people.[11] For instance, Amotekun was created in the South West as a complementary force to federal policing, alongside the South East Security Network and the Miyetii Allah in Northern Nigeria.[12] Despite these initiatives, insecurity remains widespread across the country.[13]

One key issue is that, although states face different security challenges, governors lack the authority to fully manage security in their regions, even though they serve as the chief security officers of their states. The Nigerian Constitution does not grant them control over the police. Under Section 215(4) of the Constitution, a state governor may issue lawful directives to the state's police commissioner, but these directives require the president's approval. This limitation prevents governors from taking direct action to safeguard their citizens. Consequently, there have been calls for the decentralization of policing in Nigeria, allowing for state-controlled police forces. Advocates argue

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[9] Aidonojie, P.A., Ikubanni, O.O., Oyedeji, A.I. & Oyebade, A.A. (2022). The Legal Challenges and Effect Concerning the Environmental Security in Nigeria: A lesson from International Perspective. Journal of Commercial and Property Law 9(1) 110-120

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that state policing under the control of governors would be more effective in addressing insecurity than the current centralized structure.[14]

This paper aims to examine the potential benefits and challenges of implementing a state policing system in Nigeria. By analyzing empirical data, the study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on security in a diverse nation like Nigeria and assess the feasibility of state policing as a solution to the country's security issues.

Methods

The research methodology employed in this study incorporates both doctrinal and non-doctrinal approaches. The doctrinal aspect involves the use of descriptive and analytical methods to explore the theoretical components of the study, such as the concept of state policing and the legal framework governing policing in Nigeria. The non-doctrinal approach involves the collection and analysis of empirical data from randomly selected respondents, adopting a quantitative strategy to gather insights from individuals across various geo-political zones. Since the researchers are not based in every region of Nigeria, this method allowed them to gauge public perception and understand the level of insecurity nationwide. The findings revealed a consensus that insecurity is widespread in Nigeria, with the federal government's police force unable to effectively address the issue. Additionally, the data indicated strong public support for state policing as a potential solution to the country's growing security challenges.

Results, Discussions, And Analysis
The Concept of State Policing

State policing refers to the ownership, organization, management, assessment, and mobilization of police forces by state governments within a defined geographic area. This model shifts control over policing from the federal government to the individual state governments. According to Agwanwo, state policing exists within a federal system, where state governments are responsible for recruiting police officers to protect lives and property within their jurisdiction. However, some scholars, such as Tangba and Audu, argue that this definition is too narrow.

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[14] Ikubanni, OO & Alabi, MOA (2024). Yoruba People's Quest for Sel-determination Within the Nigerian Constitution. *Fountain University Law Journal* 1(1) 37-53

In the Nigerian context, Egunjobi defines state policing as a sub-national police formation established and maintained under the direct control of a state government. Former Inspector General of Police Ehindero describes state policing as indicative of the absence of a national police force, emphasizing its locally controlled nature. This system allows states to manage the funding, ownership, mobilization, and evaluation of their police forces independently from the federal government. The common thread in these definitions is that state policing involves the governance and operational logistics of law enforcement by a state authority, distinct from federal or national oversight.

State police operate independently of the national or federal government, functioning as a decentralized law enforcement system. The rise in crime rates in Nigeria—encompassing issues such as ritual killings, armed robbery, Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, rape, and murder—has underscored the limitations of the current federally controlled police structure. This reality has intensified calls for the establishment of state policing.

Debates surrounding state policing in Nigeria present arguments both for and against its implementation. Proponents assert that state policing aligns with the federal structure established by the Nigerian Constitution. According to Section 2, Sub-section 2 of the 1999 Constitution, power is distributed between the central government and the 36 states of the federation. Sections 4 and 5 delineate legislative and executive powers for both federal and state governments. This framework is similar to the decentralized policing system in the United States, where local, regional, and national authorities each maintain their police forces.

Furthermore, the over-concentration of power in the federal government is a significant concern. With 68 items on the exclusive legislative list, the federal government faces an overwhelming burden, hindering its ability to address national security issues effectively. Former Vice President Yemi Osinbajo highlighted this challenge at the National Security Summit in Abuja, emphasizing that the complexity of Nigeria's security landscape demands more resources than are currently available. He argued for the necessity of state policing and community policing methods to enhance security across the country.

Another compelling argument in favor of state policing is its potential to alleviate youth unemployment. By employing local youths as police officers, state policing fosters a better understanding of local issues and strengthens community ties. This localized approach can enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement.

Despite these advantages, funding remains a significant obstacle to the establishment of state policing. Most states rely heavily on federal allocations for their administration, and without the ability to generate sufficient internal revenue, financing a state police force could pose substantial challenges. Current federal allocations are inadequate to manage existing state needs, let alone support the operational costs of a state police force. Additionally, the potential for conflict between federal and state police forces raises concerns about the effectiveness and stability of such a system.

In conclusion, while there are operational issues and funding challenges associated with state policing, its potential to address insecurity in Nigeria is clear. The debate should focus on how to implement state policing effectively rather than questioning its overall capacity to combat crime and enhance security.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents and analyses the data collected from random participants. Electronic questionnaires were distributed via Google Forms to garner empirical data on insecurity and prospects of state policing in Nigeria. The data collected are analsyed below:

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

To understand the level of insecurity in Nigeria, this study examined all six geopolitical zones of the country. A sample size of 1,051 respondents was selected from these zones to ensure an accurate and representative response. Participants were chosen using a simple random sampling method, which is recognized by scholars for its ability to reach a diverse audience and enhance the credibility of research findings. Research by Oladele et al., Majekodunmi et al., and Aidonojie et al. supports the use of simple random sampling for studies of this nature, highlighting several key advantages:

1. Diverse Demographics: This technique effectively selects participants from a wide range of demographics.
2. Credible Results: Since respondents are chosen randomly, the likelihood of biased or inequitable responses is minimized, leading to more neutral and credible outcomes.
3. Ease of Use: The method is straightforward and does not require specialized expertise for data analysis.

Overall, these advantages make simple random sampling a suitable choice for exploring the complex issue of insecurity in Nigeria.

Data Analysis

This section contains the analysis of the data collected from respondents. The data are presented in the exact form as collected from the respondent. Therefore, the data is credible and represents the true responses of the randomly selected respondents. For clarity, they are expressed in graphs and tabular form.
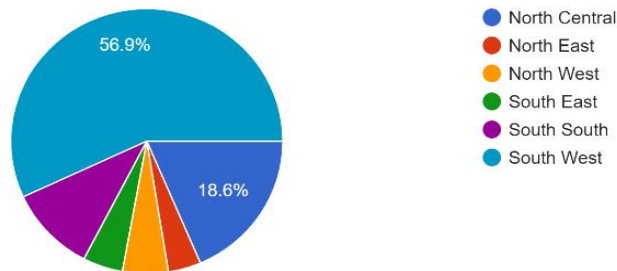
Research Question one

FIGURE 1: Represents The Geo-Political Zones Where The Respondents Reside In Nigeria

TABLE 1: Valid respondents identifying the geo-political zone they reside in

Which of the following Geo-political zones in Nigeria do you reside?
1,051 responses

Nigeria

Geopolitical Zones in Nigeria	Respondents' Responses	Percentage
North Central	195	18.6%
North East	41	3.9%
North West	57	5.4%
South East	50	4.8%
South South	110	10.5%
South West	598	56.9%
	1,051	100%

Figure 1 and **Table 1** indicate the identification of the geo-political zones that the respondents reside

Research Question Two

FIGURE 2 : Represents How The Respondents Responded To The Inquiry On Whether They Think That There Is Insecurity In Nigeria

Do you think there is insecurity in your region and generally in Nigeria?
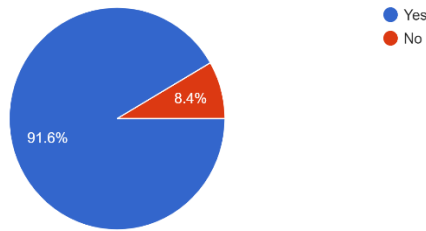1,051 responses

TABLE 2 : Indicates That A Larger Percentage Of The Respondents Confirmed That There Is Insecurity In Nigeria.

	Response	**Percentage**
Valid Yes	968	91.6%
Valid No	88	8.4%
Total	1, 051	100%

Figure 1 and **Table 1** represent the confirmation of the randomly selected respondents that there is insecurity in Nigeria.

Research Question Three

FIGURE 3 : Represents The Responses Of The Respondents To The Question That Seeks To Determine Whether The Nigerian Police Force Under The Control Of The Federal Government Of Nigeria Has Competently Combated Insecurity In Nigeria Over The Last Decade.

Over the last decade, do you think the Nigerian Police under the Control of the Federal Government has competently combated insecurity in Nigeria?
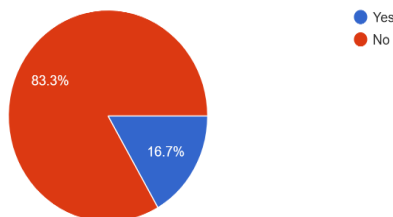1,051 responses

TABLE 3 : Indicates That A Larger Percentage Of The Respondents Confirmed That Over The Last Decade, The Nigerian Police Force Under The Control Of The Federal Government Of Nigeria Has Competently Combated Insecurity In Nigeria.

	Response	Percentage
Valid Yes	175	16.7%
Valid No	876	83.3%
Total	1, 051	100%

Figure 3 and **Table 3** are the reflections on how the respondents reacted to the question concerning the performance of the Nigerian police under the control of the federal government in combating insecurity in Nigeria. Their response confirms the poor or underperformance of the Nigerian police under the federal government in combating insecurity.

Research Question four

FIGURE 4 : Indicates The Various Forms Of Insecurity In Nigeria

Which of the following is the form of insecurity that is prevalent in Nigeria (You can pick more than one)
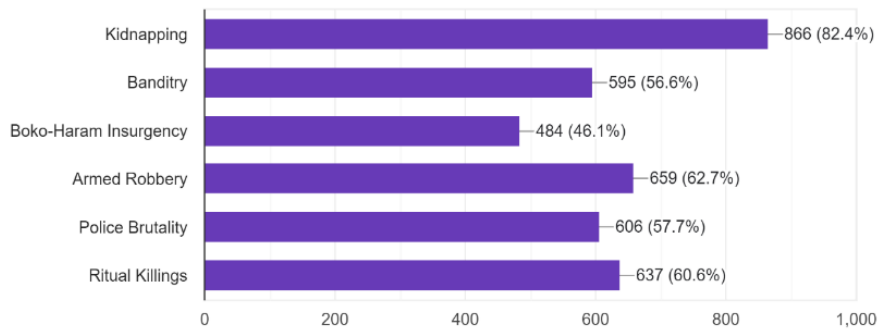
1,051 responses

Kidnapping		866 (82.4%)
Banditry		595 (56.6%)
Boko-Haram Insurgency		484 (46.1%)
Armed Robbery		659 (62.7%)
Police Brutality		606 (57.7%)
Ritual Killings		637 (60.6%)

TABLE 4 : Valid Cluster Responses On The Various Forms Of Insecurity Challenges Facing Nigeria

Forms of Insecurity in Nigeria	Cluster of Response	Percentage
Kidnapping	866	82.4%
Banditry	595	56.6%
Boko-Haram Insurgency	484	46.1%
Armed Robbery	659	62.7%

Police Brutality	606	57.7%
Ritual Killings	637	60.6%

Question five

FIGURE 5 : Valid responses of the respondents confirming that the State Policing System has the prospect of helping to curb insecurity issues in Nigeria

Do you think State Policing System will help to Curb Insecurity in Nigeria?
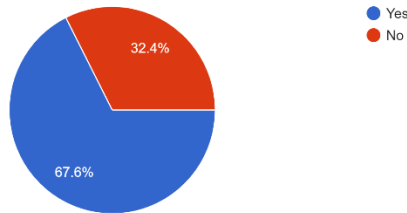1,051 responses

● Yes
● No

32.4%

67.6%

TABLE 5 : Represents How The Respondents Responded To The Prospect Of The State Policing System Helping To Curb Insecurity In Nigeria.

Geopolitical Zones in Nigeria	Respondents' Responses	Percentage
North Central	195	18.6%
North East	41	3.9%
North West	57	5.4%

Figure 5 and **Table 5** above are valid confirmations of the prospect of the state policing system in curbing insecurity in Nigeria

Question six

FIGURE 6 : Reflects The Cluster Valid Responses Of The Respondents To The Possible Challenges To The Operation Of State Policing In Nigeria

What are the possible challenges to the Operation of State Police in Nigeria?
1,051 responses
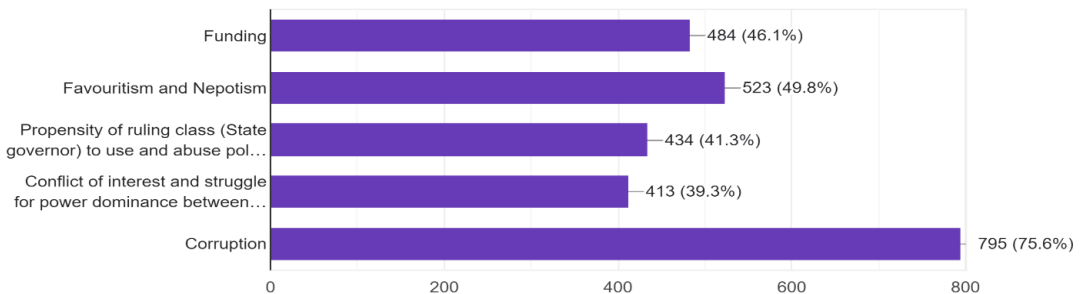

Funding — 484 (46.1%)
Favouritism and Nepotism — 523 (49.8%)
Propensity of ruling class (State governor) to use and abuse pol… — 434 (41.3%)
Conflict of interest and struggle for power dominance between… — 413 (39.3%)
Corruption — 795 (75.6%)

TABLE 6 : Valid Clusters Of Responses To The Possible Challenges Of State Policing In Nigeria

Geopolitical Zones in Nigeria	Respondents' Responses	Percentage
North Central	195	18.6%
North East	41	3.9%
North West	57	5.4%
South East	50	4.8%
South South	110	10.5%
South West	598	56.9%

Figure 6 and **Table 6** are valid clusters of possible challenges to state policing in Nigeria

This study analyses the data collected from the randomly selected respondents and identifies the findings of the study thus:

A careful perusal of Figure 1 and Table 1 reveals that the questionnaire was distributed across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. This demographical selection of the respondents offers credibility to the outcome of the study. A total of 1, 051 respondents were randomly selected to guarantee neutral, impartial, and unbiased responses. The South West has the highest representation with 598 respondents which equates to 56.9% of the total number of respondents while the North Central has the second highest representation with 195 respondents which equates to 18.6%. Others in the order of their representation are South South with 110 respondents which equates to 4.8%, North West has 57 respondents (5.45%), South East has 50 respondents (4.8%), and finally North East with 41 respondents (3.9%) respectively.

As shown in Figure 2 and Table 2 above, empirical data collected demonstrates that there is insecurity across the six geo-political zones that constitute Nigeria. A total of 963 (91.6%) of the respondents alluded to the existence of this menace in Nigeria while an insignificant 88 (8.4%) of the respondents denied that there is insecurity in Nigeria. To this end, it was imperative to determine how the Nigerian Police has fared under the control of the federal government in combating insecurity in Nigeria. Figure 3 and Table demonstrates that 876 (83.3%) respondents out of a total of 1,051 confirmed that the Nigerian police under the control of the federal government have failed woefully in combating insecurity. This justifies the necessity for state policing.

Figure 4 and Table reveal that kidnapping, Banditry, Boko-Haram insurgency, Armed robbery, Police brutality, and ritual killings are forms of insecurity prevalent in Nigeria.

Be that as it may, based on the failure of the Nigerian police under the control of the federal government of Nigeria to combat insecurity, it became sacrosanct to empirically determine the prospect of state policing in Nigeria. To this end, Figure 5 and Table 5 show the respondents' thoughts on the prospect of state policing in Nigeria. 710 (67.6%) respondents indicated that state policing has the prospect of curbing insecurity in Nigeria. However, 341(32.4%) of the respondents disagree with the prospect of state policing curbing insecurity in Nigeria. However, even with the possibility of state policing curbing insecurity in Nigeria, the following possible challenges were identified by respondents that may stifle the operation of state policing in Nigeria:

1. Funding: identified by 484 (46.1%) of the respondents. Adebayo and Ojo in their earlier research buttressed the issue of funding as a possible challenge to the operation of state police in Nigeria because most states of the federation still depend on federal allocation to finance the running of their states. State policing would worsen the already weak financial position of the state (Adebayo & Ojo, 2009).

2. Favouristism and Nepotism as revealed by 523 (49.8%) of the respondents.

3. The propensity of the ruling class (state governors) to use and abuse state police against their opponents was identified by 434 (41.3%) of the respondents as one of the possible challenges of state policing in Nigeria

4. Conflict of interest and struggle for power dominance between federal and state police was also identified as a possible challenge to state policing in Nigeria as indicated by 413 (39.3%) respondents. Muazu argued that just as conflict arises between the police and the army as rival security agencies, conflict between federal and state police is inevitable as both agencies would constantly test their dominance over the other (Muazu, 2004)

5. Corruption: This is one of the major challenges to the growth of Nigeria as a nation. It is not surprising that 795 (75.6%) identified corruption as one of the possible challenges to state policing in Nigeria.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the rise in insecurity in Nigeria over the last decade is alarming. There have been unending cases of kidnapping, banditry, armed robbery, ritual killings, secessionist struggles, Boko-haram insurgency, cultism, and so on in different parts of Nigeria. These are a testament to the inability of the Nigerian police force under the current legal structure to protect the lives and properties of the Nigerian people. This study sheds light on the level of insecurity across the various geo-political zones that constitute the Nigerian state. The results from the empirical data collected demonstrate that across the six geo-political zones there are concerns that the federal policing system can no longer hold the country together in the area of security. Therefore, there are agitations for the decentralization of the current federal policing system and the creation of a state policing system that confers the responsibility for the security of the people within a state on the governor of the state without necessarily abolishing the federal policing system. It thus suggests that state policing would play a complementary role to the federal policing system in the fight against insecurity in Nigeria.

There are prospects for state policing in Nigeria. However, the study identified some of the possible challenges to its operation in Nigeria which include funding, favouritism and nepotism in the recruitment of officers, corruption, and conflict between federal and state police officers amongst others. It is there for important that these challenges are borne in mind before the establishment of state policing. Otherwise, its operation may be dead on arrival. Therefore, this study recommends the following:

1. The amendment of the current legal framework on policing in Nigeria to give away for the state policing system.

2. There is a need for a regulatory body that sets the standard for recruitment and training of police officers at both federal and state levels.

3. There is a need for the State Police Service Commission similar to the Federal Police Service Commission to facilitate the promotion, recruitment, and discipline of state police officers.

4. Development of legislative measures and operational guidelines that would enhance the independence of state police to shield them from the political control of the state governors.

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