

# **POLICING STRUCTURES IN SUB-NATIONAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES: NIGERIA'S CASE STUDY**

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Sub-national Law Enforcement in Nigeria and  
Contemporary Challenges

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# INTRODUCTION

**This presentation examines the complexities of sub-national policing structures in Africa, with focus on Nigeria as case study.**


**It explores how colonialism influences our law enforcement and governance today.**

**It also examines challenges and intricacies this legacy presents and provides recommendations.**



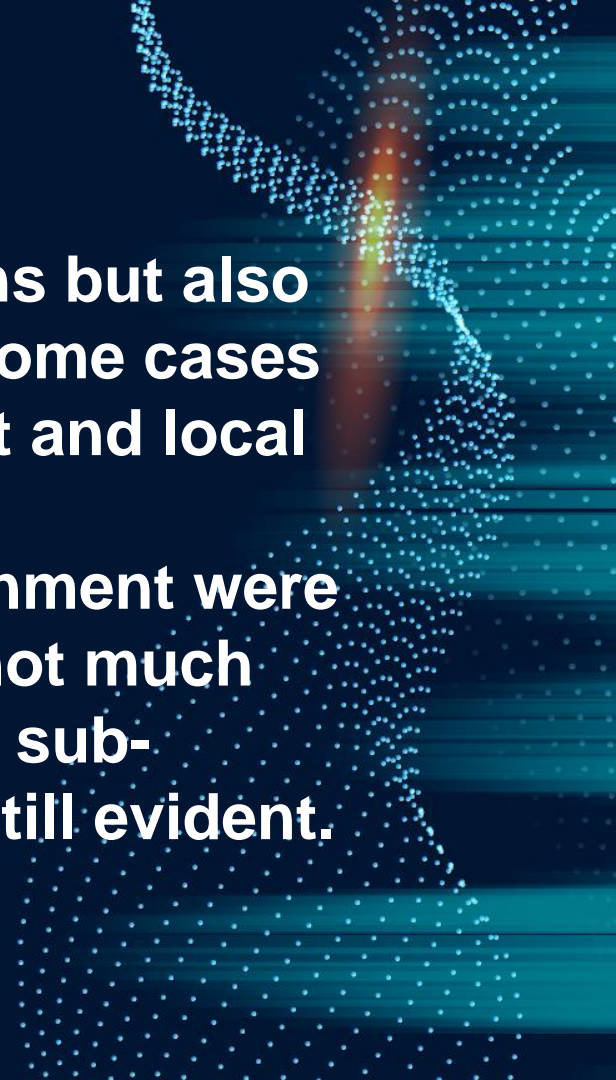
# CONTEXT

## Colonization and its Legacy

- **Most African countries, including Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Zambia, are products of colonization.**
  - **Britain stood as a significant colonial power in the aforementioned countries.**
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# CONTEXT 1

- Colonialism did not just shape nations but also their policing structures, leading in some cases to tensions between law enforcement and local communities.
  - Owing to reason that Colonial Government were centralized and often at the federal, not much attention was paid to communities at sub-national levels and relics of this is still evident.
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# UNIQUE CHALLENGES IN AFRICA

- Variability in governance, historic influences, and socio-political contexts
- Inherited structures from colonial times
- Issues like understaffing (police needed mostly for protection of the colonialists), human rights abuses, and local governance complexities





# **NIGERIA POLICE STRUCTURES**

- **Nigeria operates as a federation with federating units.**
- **Tripod structure: Federal, Sub-national, & Local Govts.**
- **Powers derived from the 1999 Constitution**
- **Each tier has sphere of authority for lawmaking, policies, and programs, including police and policing**



# **NIGERIA POLICE STRUCTURES 1**

- **Nigeria operates about 350,000 person, centralized Police Force with units at the sub-national level.**
- **These units are all answerable to and controlled at the National Level, with oversight by the Police Service Commission, another federal agency**
- **This creates challenges at the Local Government Level**



# HUMAN RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS

- The National Police is understaffed in comparison to Nigeria's 200 million strong population. There are about 250,000 officers serving over 200million Nigerians



- The few well trained, armed and kitted officers are assigned to VIPs



# **HUMAN RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS 1**

- **This shortage of police manpower is a critical issue**
- **It has led to human rights abuses & systemic inefficiency**
- **Shortage of personnel leads to banditry, crime, & rise of alternative governments at rural levels, without police presence**
- **Law and Order is a challenge in hinterland at sub-nationals**



# **HUMAN RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS 2**

- **Oversight by the Police Service Commission is also weak, with about 275 personnel**
- **It is situated in only Abuja, with consequent inability to ensure professionalism at sub-nationals**
- **Its budget is consequently low and so ill equipped to investigate complaints from sub-nationals.**

# COMMUNITY LEVEL CHALLENGES



- Some Sub-nationals as a result have now resort to quasi-police outfits
- These include forces like Amotekun in parts of the South West, Community Volunteer Guards in Benue, LATSMA in Lagos, Hisbah in the North, etc



# **RISE OF LOCAL MILITIA**

**Gaps have also led to rise of non-state sponsored militias in parts of the country, These include:**

- Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB**
- Bakassi Boys**
- Arewa Boys ...and other such options**



# CONCERNS

- Currently at sub-nationals there exists, two types of “policing” structures:
- Quasi police by sub-national governments
- Other non state actors, whose militia or vigilantes are in charge, sometimes taxing citizens in exchange for security.
- Citizens in hinterlands of the sub-nationals are the victims





# CONCERNS 1

## **Governance by religious laws**

- The Hisbah in parts of Nigeria's far north where Sharia laws coexist with federal and sub national laws.
- This sometimes generates tensions in communities with diverse beliefs



# BARRIERS TO SUB-NATIONAL POLICE

- **Control** - A centralized police force allows FG direct control over law enforcement across the country.
- **Likelihood of Abuse** - There may be concerns that state-controlled police could be misused by local or state politicians, leading to localized conflict.

# BARRIERS TO SUB-NATIONAL POLICE 1

- **Resources** - States lack financial and logistical resources to adequately support their own police forces. Outside of oil producing states, non can resource Sub-national police
- **National Cohesion** - A centralized police force is often viewed as a unifying institution.
- **Citizens' fears** - Lack of trust in the ruling class has led to valid fears of abuse of sub-national policing



# **SUB-NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA TODAY**

- **This is a challenge, yet, NPF has performed creditably well, given their numbers and the stretch on their numbers and resources**
- **The country is reasonably stable and safe owing to contributions (financial and equipment) of sub-national governments to the federal police posted to their states**



# **SUB-NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA TODAY 1**

- **State quasi police, LASTMA, Benue Volunteer Guards, etc are also doing well in keeping law and order, despite excesses recorded**
- **Communities at sub-nationals have also been outstanding in formation of local vigilantes that work with the federal police in securing their environs.**



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## **Allocate Sufficient Funding for Training**

- Ensuring that sub-national police forces are in place and adequately funded can facilitate training thereby achieving better outcomes. State police funds can be made constitutional and deducted from federal revenue

## **Transition to Sub-National Forces with Local Oversight**

- of the federal police, instead of a centralized command, establish local oversight bodies for decentralized sub-national police to improve accountability





# RECOMMENDATIONS 1

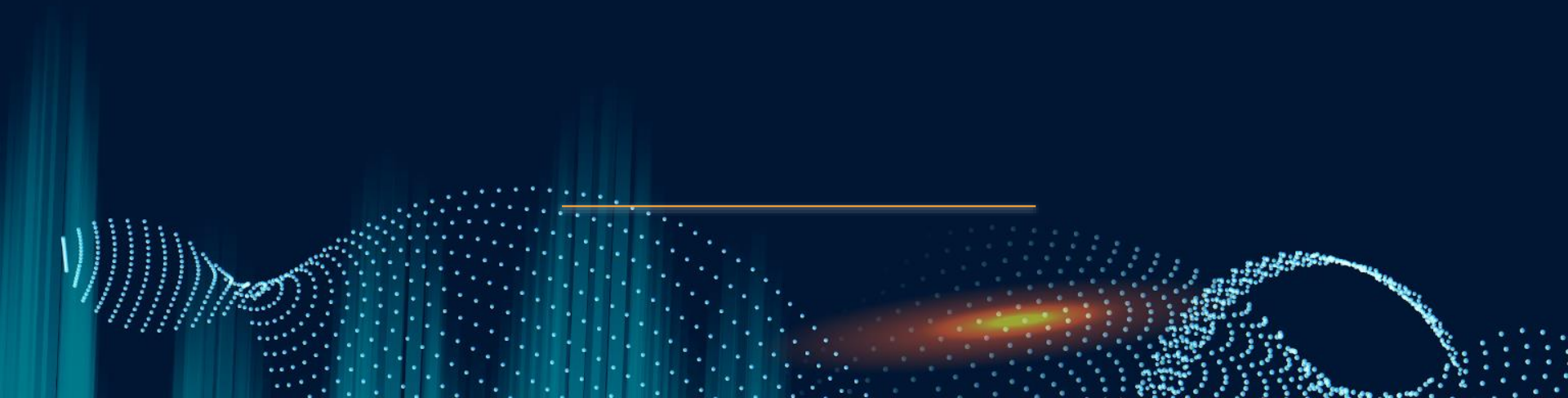
- **Adopt Section 113 of the Police Act 2020 and Promote Grassroots Human Rights Education**

**Community policing is cost effective and aligns with existing legislation. Additionally, focus on human rights education for security personnel at the grassroots level to foster community trust and uphold legal standards.**



# CONCLUSION

**In addressing policing challenges in Nigeria, decentralization, community involvement, and human rights education are key steps toward more effective and fair law enforcement.**





**“ Empowering our  
communities to work with  
state security agencies is  
our surest path to  
protection ”**

*—Rommy Mom, President Lawyers Alert*



# THANK YOU!

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Any questions?



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