

Policing the Nigerian Police: Implications on Nigeria's Security Architecture and Democratic Consolidation

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ABSTRACT

The Nigerian Police Force (NPF) occupies a central position in Nigeria's internal security framework and democratic governance structure, serving as the primary institution responsible for law enforcement, crime prevention, and the maintenance of public order. Despite this strategic role, the NPF remains one of the most controversial and distrusted public institutions in Nigeria, frequently associated with corruption, abuse of power, human rights violations, and weak accountability mechanisms. This paper interrogates the concept of "policing the police" and examines its implications for Nigeria's security architecture and democratic consolidation. Anchored on democratic policing, institutional accountability, and security sector governance theories, the study argues that persistent failure to effectively regulate police conduct has undermined national security, weakened public trust in state institutions, and constrained democratic consolidation. Relying on qualitative analysis of secondary data drawn from academic literature, policy documents, and reports by human rights organizations, the paper demonstrates that weak internal and external oversight mechanisms have entrenched a culture of impunity within the police institution. The study further contends that ineffective police accountability has broader systemic consequences, including poor intelligence gathering, increasing militarization of internal security, the proliferation of non-state security actors, and the erosion of the rule of law. By situating police accountability within the broader discourse on security architecture and democratic governance, the paper contributes to existing scholarship by highlighting the interdependence between accountable policing, citizen trust, and democratic stability. The paper concludes that meaningful reform of Nigeria's security architecture and the consolidation of democracy are

unattainable without robust mechanisms to police the police, strengthen civilian oversight, and restore public confidence in law enforcement institutions.

Keywords: Police Accountability; Nigerian Police Force; Security Architecture; Democratic Consolidation; Democratic Policing

I. INTRODUCTION

Policing constitutes a foundational element of state authority, internal security, and democratic governance in contemporary societies. As the institution most directly interfacing with citizens, the police serve as the most visible representation of the state's coercive power and its commitment to law, order, and justice. In democratic systems, however, the legitimacy and effectiveness of the police are not determined solely by their capacity to enforce laws, but by the extent to which their operations are regulated by accountability, professionalism, respect for human rights, and civilian oversight (Bayley, 2006). Where policing institutions operate without effective oversight, they risk becoming instruments of repression, undermining democratic consolidation and contributing to insecurity rather than mitigating it.

Nigeria's internal security environment has deteriorated markedly over the past two decades, reflecting the complex interaction between governance failures, socio-economic pressures, and institutional weaknesses. The country faces a diverse range of security threats, including insurgency and terrorism in the North-East, banditry and mass kidnapping in the North-West, violent farmer-herder conflicts in the Middle Belt, separatist agitations in the South-East, militancy and oil theft in the Niger Delta, and escalating urban crime across major cities (International Crisis Group, 2022). These challenges have exposed deep structural

deficiencies within Nigeria's security architecture, particularly at the level of internal security management.

Although Nigeria operates a multi-agency security system, the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) remains the backbone of internal security. Constitutionally mandated to prevent crime, protect lives and property, and maintain public order, the police play a critical role in intelligence gathering, community engagement, and the everyday enforcement of the rule of law. Yet, despite this central role, the NPF has consistently struggled to perform its functions effectively. Public perceptions of the police are overwhelmingly negative, shaped by routine experiences of extortion, brutality, unlawful detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings (Amnesty International, 2020). These practices have eroded public trust and weakened cooperation between citizens and law enforcement agencies.

The implications of this crisis extend beyond policing outcomes to the broader project of democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Democratic consolidation requires stable institutions, adherence to the rule of law, protection of civil liberties, and accountable governance. The police, as enforcers of law and order, are pivotal to these processes. When police institutions are perceived as predatory, politicized, or unaccountable, citizens' confidence in democratic institutions diminishes, electoral processes become securitized, and the legitimacy of the state is weakened. In this sense, police misconduct constitutes not only a human rights problem but also a structural obstacle to democratic consolidation.

The roots of Nigeria's policing challenges are deeply embedded in the colonial origins of the police institution. Colonial policing in Nigeria was designed primarily as an instrument of domination and social control rather than public service or citizen protection (Alemika, 2010). This legacy of authoritarianism, coercion, and detachment from local communities has persisted into the postcolonial era, shaping police culture, operational practices, and institutional norms. Despite numerous reform initiatives since Nigeria's return to civilian rule in 1999, these foundational deficiencies remain largely unresolved.

Central to Nigeria's policing crisis is the persistent failure to effectively "police the police." Policing the police refers to the range of internal and external mechanisms established to regulate police conduct, enforce discipline, ensure accountability, and align policing practices with democratic norms and legal standards (Prenzler & den Heyer, 2015). These mechanisms typically include internal disciplinary systems, civilian oversight bodies, judicial review, legislative scrutiny, and the oversight roles of the media and civil society. In contexts where such mechanisms function effectively, police professionalism is strengthened, misconduct is deterred, and public trust is enhanced. In Nigeria, however, these accountability mechanisms remain weak, fragmented, and inconsistently applied.

The consequences of weak police accountability are far-reaching. When police officers operate with impunity, public confidence in the justice system collapses, cooperation with law enforcement declines, and intelligence flows are disrupted. These dynamics create security gaps that criminal networks, insurgent groups, and other violent non-state actors readily exploit (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2011). Furthermore, ineffective policing has encouraged the increasing militarization of internal security, with the armed forces frequently deployed to perform routine policing functions—an arrangement that raises serious concerns for democratic governance and civil–military relations (Onuoha, 2019).

The nationwide #EndSARS protests of October 2020 vividly illustrated the depth of public frustration with police brutality and the failure of existing oversight mechanisms. What began as a protest against the Special Anti-Robbery Squad evolved into a broader movement demanding police accountability, respect for human rights, and governance reforms (Akinwale, 2021). The protests underscored the intimate connection between policing, security governance, and democratic legitimacy in Nigeria.

Against this backdrop, this paper argues that effective policing of the Nigerian Police Force is indispensable for strengthening Nigeria's security architecture and consolidating democracy. The central thesis is that police accountability is a prerequisite for sustainable internal security, public trust, and democratic stability. The study adopts a qualitative analytical approach, relying on secondary data from academic literature, policy documents, and reports by human rights organizations. Its objectives are threefold: to examine the concept of policing the police within democratic policing frameworks; to analyze the legal and institutional mechanisms for police accountability in Nigeria; and to assess the implications of weak police oversight for Nigeria's security architecture and democratic consolidation.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

A rigorous analysis of policing the Nigerian Police Force requires an engagement with theoretical frameworks that explain the relationship between police accountability, democratic governance, and security outcomes. This study is anchored on three interrelated perspectives: democratic policing theory, institutional accountability theory, and security sector governance theory. Collectively, these frameworks provide a robust analytical lens for understanding why effective oversight of the police is indispensable not only for internal security but also for democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Democratic Policing Theory

Democratic policing theory emphasizes that policing in democratic societies must be governed by the rule of law, respect for human rights, transparency, professionalism, and accountability to civilian authority (Bayley, 2006). From this perspective, the police are not merely instruments of crime control but public service institutions whose legitimacy derives from popular consent. Democratic policing requires that police powers be exercised within clearly defined legal boundaries and subject to effective oversight mechanisms.

A core assumption of democratic policing theory is that police legitimacy directly affects citizens' willingness to comply with the law and cooperate with law enforcement agencies. Procedural justice theorists argue that when citizens perceive police actions as fair, impartial, and accountable, they are more likely to view the state as legitimate and obey its laws voluntarily (Tyler, 2004). In contrast, arbitrary or abusive policing undermines public trust and weakens the foundations of democratic governance. In Nigeria, widespread experiences of police brutality, extortion, and impunity suggest a significant departure from democratic policing ideals, with serious consequences for democratic consolidation.

Institutional Accountability Theory

Institutional accountability theory complements democratic policing by focusing on the mechanisms through which power holders are constrained and held responsible for their actions. Accountability exists when public officials are required to explain and justify their conduct and face sanctions when their actions violate established norms or legal standards (Bovens, 2007). Applied to policing, this means that police officers and commanders must be answerable for their conduct through both internal disciplinary systems and external oversight institutions.

Effective accountability mechanisms perform both preventive and corrective functions. They deter misconduct by increasing the likelihood of detection and punishment, and they reinforce institutional norms by signaling that abuses of power are unacceptable. In Nigeria, however, weak accountability structures have allowed police misconduct to persist with minimal consequences, reinforcing a culture of impunity and institutional decay (Alemika, 2010). This accountability deficit has undermined public confidence in the police and weakened the credibility of democratic institutions more broadly.

Security Sector Governance Theory

Security sector governance theory situates police accountability within the broader architecture of state security institutions. It posits that effective security provision depends on coherent institutions governed by principles of transparency, civilian oversight, rule of law,

and respect for human rights (Hänggi, 2004). From this perspective, the police are a central component of the security sector whose performance directly affects the stability and legitimacy of the state.

Failure to effectively police the police represents a structural weakness within the security sector that can destabilize the entire security architecture. In Nigeria, deficiencies in police oversight have compromised coordination among security agencies, encouraged the militarization of internal security, and weakened civilian control over the use of force. These dynamics not only exacerbate insecurity but also pose risks to democratic consolidation by normalizing exceptional security measures and undermining civil liberties.

Conceptual Clarifications

Conceptually, policing the police refers to the range of formal and informal mechanisms designed to regulate police behavior, ensure compliance with legal and ethical standards, and align policing practices with democratic norms. These mechanisms include internal disciplinary processes, civilian oversight institutions, judicial review, legislative scrutiny, and societal oversight through the media and civil society organizations (Prenzler & den Heyer, 2015). Effective policing of the police requires coordination and synergy among these mechanisms.

Security architecture refers to the institutional arrangements, legal frameworks, norms, and operational practices through which a state organizes its internal and external security responses (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). In Nigeria, the police constitute the cornerstone of this architecture at the domestic level. Weak accountability within the police therefore represents a fundamental vulnerability in Nigeria's security system.

Democratic consolidation denotes the process through which democratic norms, institutions, and practices become stable, legitimate, and broadly accepted by citizens. Central to this process are respect for the rule of law, protection of civil liberties, and accountable governance. Because the police are responsible for enforcing laws and safeguarding rights, their accountability is a critical determinant of whether democracy is consolidated or undermined.

III. LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR POLICING THE POLICE IN NIGERIA

The Nigerian Police Force derives its authority from the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). Section 214 establishes the NPF as a centralized force under federal control, while Section 215 vests operational command in the Inspector General of Police, subject to the oversight of the President. Although centralization was intended to promote uniformity, coordination, and national cohesion, it has also concentrated

power in ways that weaken accountability and limit responsiveness to local security needs (Olowu, 2018).

The Police Service Commission (PSC)

One of the key institutions responsible for policing the police in Nigeria is the Police Service Commission (PSC). Constitutionally empowered to appoint, promote, and discipline police officers—excluding the Inspector General of Police—the PSC is designed to serve as an external civilian oversight body. In principle, this arrangement provides a check on police misconduct and reinforces civilian control over the police. In practice, however, the PSC has faced significant constraints, including inadequate funding, political interference, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and overlapping mandates with the police hierarchy (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2019). These challenges have undermined its effectiveness and public credibility.

Internal Accountability Mechanisms

Within the Nigerian Police Force, internal accountability mechanisms include the Orderly Room Trial, the Provost Marshal, and internal monitoring units. These structures are intended to enforce discipline and professional standards. However, they have been widely criticized for lack of transparency, selective enforcement, and institutional bias. Disciplinary measures are often disproportionately applied to junior officers, while senior officers accused of serious abuses frequently evade accountability (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Such practices reinforce perceptions of injustice and weaken internal morale.

Judicial Oversight

The judiciary constitutes another important mechanism for policing the police. Nigerian courts have issued rulings condemning unlawful detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings by police officers (Amnesty International, 2020). Nevertheless, access to justice remains limited for many victims due to high litigation costs, procedural delays, and fear of retaliation. Consequently, judicial oversight has had limited deterrent impact on police misconduct.

Legislative Oversight

Legislative oversight of policing is exercised through the National Assembly and state houses of assembly, which possess constitutional powers to investigate police activities, approve budgets, and conduct public hearings. Despite these powers, legislative oversight has been largely reactive and inconsistent. Parliamentary interventions often occur in response to public scandals rather than as part of sustained institutional monitoring, limiting their effectiveness in promoting long-term accountability (Onuoha, 2019).

IV. CHALLENGES UNDERMINING EFFECTIVE POLICING OF THE POLICE IN NIGERIA

Despite the existence of constitutional, legal, and institutional mechanisms intended to regulate police conduct in Nigeria, multiple structural and contextual challenges continue to undermine effective policing of the Nigerian Police Force. These challenges are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, creating a systemic accountability deficit that weakens both Nigeria's security architecture and its democratic consolidation.

4.1 Entrenched Culture of Impunity

One of the most significant obstacles to effective police accountability in Nigeria is the entrenched culture of impunity within the Nigerian Police Force. For decades, weak enforcement of disciplinary measures has normalized misconduct, creating an institutional environment in which police officers often operate with little fear of sanctions for abusive behavior (Alemika, 2010). Informal norms within the police frequently prioritize loyalty to colleagues over adherence to legal and ethical standards, discouraging officers from reporting misconduct by their peers.

This culture of impunity is particularly damaging to democratic consolidation because it signals the state's inability or unwillingness to uphold the rule of law. When law enforcement agents routinely violate the law without consequences, citizens' faith in democratic institutions erodes, and perceptions of selective justice become entrenched. In Nigeria, repeated failures to prosecute officers involved in extrajudicial killings and torture have reinforced public cynicism toward accountability processes (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

4.2 Political Interference and Politicization of Policing

Political interference remains a major impediment to policing the police in Nigeria. Historically, the police have been deployed as instruments of political control, particularly during elections, protests, and periods of civil unrest (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2011). Political elites often exert influence over police postings, promotions, and disciplinary outcomes, undermining the autonomy of oversight institutions such as the Police Service Commission.

The politicization of policing has serious implications for democratic consolidation. In democratic systems, the neutrality of the police is essential for credible elections, peaceful political competition, and protection of civil liberties. In Nigeria, allegations of police partisanship and selective enforcement of the law during electoral periods have raised concerns about the integrity of democratic processes (International Crisis Group, 2022). When police accountability is compromised by political interests,

democratic norms are weakened and public trust in governance declines.

4.3 Resource Constraints and Capacity Deficits

Chronic underfunding of the Nigerian Police Force and its oversight institutions represents another critical challenge. Poor funding has resulted in inadequate training, obsolete equipment, dilapidated infrastructure, and low morale among police officers. These conditions create incentives for corruption and extortion, as officers seek informal means of supplementing their income (CLEEN Foundation, 2021). Oversight institutions such as the Police Service Commission and judicial panels of inquiry also suffer from resource constraints that limit their capacity to investigate complaints thoroughly and independently. From a security architecture perspective, these capacity deficits weaken the institutional foundations of internal security, making accountability reforms difficult to implement and sustain.

4.4 Public Distrust, Fear, and Weak Societal Oversight

Public distrust of the police significantly undermines societal oversight mechanisms. Many Nigerians are reluctant to report police abuse due to fear of retaliation, skepticism about the likelihood of justice, and previous experiences of intimidation (Amnesty International, 2020). This reluctance limits the flow of information necessary for effective accountability and reinforces police impunity. Civil society organizations and the media play crucial roles in exposing police misconduct and advocating reform. However, their effectiveness is often constrained by legal restrictions, harassment, and limited access to official information. Weak societal oversight reduces pressure on state institutions to enforce accountability, allowing abusive practices to persist.

4.5 Centralization of Policing and Accountability Gaps

The highly centralized structure of policing in Nigeria further complicates accountability. A single federal police force operating across diverse socio-cultural and political contexts has struggled to respond effectively to local security needs. Centralization distances police leadership from local communities, weakening informal accountability mechanisms and community-based oversight (Olowu, 2018).

Critics argue that this structural arrangement undermines democratic consolidation by limiting local participation in security governance. In contrast, decentralized or community-oriented policing models are often associated with stronger police–community relations and enhanced accountability. While decentralization alone is not a panacea, Nigeria’s centralized policing system has contributed to accountability gaps that weaken internal security and democratic legitimacy.

4.6 Weak Implementation of Reform Initiatives

Nigeria has launched numerous police reform initiatives over the years, particularly since the return to civilian rule in 1999. These include salary increases, training reforms, community policing programs, and the establishment of oversight bodies. However, implementation has been inconsistent, poorly coordinated, and often undermined by lack of political will (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2019).

The gap between policy rhetoric and practical outcomes has reinforced public skepticism toward reform efforts. Without credible enforcement mechanisms, reforms remain symbolic and fail to address underlying accountability deficits. This pattern reflects a broader governance challenge that affects democratic consolidation, where institutional reforms are frequently announced but weakly implemented.

V. THE #ENDSARS MOVEMENT AND THE POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY CRISIS

The #EndSARS protests of October 2020 represent a critical juncture in Nigeria’s struggle for police accountability and democratic governance. Triggered by longstanding grievances against the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), the protests quickly evolved into a nationwide movement demanding systemic police reform, accountability, and respect for human rights (Akinwale, 2021).

5.1 #EndSARS as a Crisis of Democratic Legitimacy

The scale and intensity of the protests reflected deep-seated public frustration with police abuses and the failure of existing oversight mechanisms. Young Nigerians, in particular, framed police brutality as evidence of broader governance failures, including corruption, unemployment, and political exclusion. In this sense, #EndSARS was not merely a policing protest but a challenge to the legitimacy of Nigeria’s democratic institutions.

5.2 State Response and Accountability Outcomes

In response to the protests, the federal and state governments announced the dissolution of SARS and established judicial panels of inquiry to investigate police abuses. While these measures signaled official recognition of the problem, implementation has been uneven and slow. Many panels lacked enforcement powers, and compensation for victims has been inconsistent (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

The limited impact of post-#EndSARS reforms underscores the structural weaknesses of Nigeria’s accountability framework. Without sustained political commitment and institutional capacity, episodic reform efforts are unlikely to produce lasting change.

VI. POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY AND INSTITUTIONAL LEGITIMACY IN NIGERIA

Institutional legitimacy is central to effective policing, internal security, and democratic consolidation. Legitimacy refers to the belief among citizens that state institutions exercise authority in a manner that is lawful, fair, and morally justified. In democratic societies, the police derive legitimacy not merely from their coercive capacity but from public perceptions of procedural fairness, accountability, and respect for rights (Tyler, 2004).

In Nigeria, persistent patterns of police misconduct have severely undermined the legitimacy of the Nigerian Police Force. Routine practices such as arbitrary arrests, extortion at checkpoints, torture during investigations, and extrajudicial killings have fostered widespread perceptions of the police as predatory rather than protective (Amnesty International, 2020). These perceptions weaken voluntary compliance with the law and reduce citizens' willingness to cooperate with law enforcement agencies.

From the perspective of democratic consolidation, weak police legitimacy has far-reaching consequences. Democratic consolidation depends on citizens' trust in institutions responsible for enforcing laws and protecting rights. When the police are viewed as instruments of oppression or political manipulation, confidence in the democratic system erodes. In Nigeria, declining police legitimacy has contributed to voter apathy, protest politics, and increasing reliance on informal and non-state security arrangements.

Effective policing of the police can enhance institutional legitimacy by reinforcing accountability, professionalism, and transparency. When officers are held accountable for

misconduct, it signals a commitment to the rule of law and strengthens public confidence in democratic governance. Conversely, failure to sanction abusive behavior perpetuates institutional fragility and democratic distrust.

VII. IMPLICATIONS OF WEAK POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR NIGERIA'S SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

The inability to effectively police the Nigerian Police Force has profound implications for Nigeria's security architecture. Security architecture encompasses the institutional arrangements, legal frameworks, norms, and operational practices through which a state organizes its security responses (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). As the primary institution responsible for internal security, the police constitute the foundation of this architecture.

7.1 Erosion of Public Trust and Security Effectiveness

One of the most significant consequences of weak police accountability is the erosion of public trust. Trust is a critical resource for effective policing because it facilitates cooperation between citizens and law enforcement. In Nigeria, widespread distrust has discouraged crime reporting and reduced community engagement with the police, undermining crime prevention and investigation efforts (Amnesty International, 2020).

7.2 Breakdown of Intelligence Gathering and Early Warning Systems

Contemporary security management relies heavily on intelligence-led policing, which depends on timely and accurate information from local communities. Adversarial police-community relations disrupt intelligence flows, weakening early warning systems and enabling criminal and insurgent groups to operate with relative impunity (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2011). This intelligence deficit has had serious implications for Nigeria's ability to address complex security threats such as terrorism, banditry, and organized crime.

7.3 Militarization of Internal Security

Weak police capacity and credibility have contributed to the increasing militarization of internal security in Nigeria. The armed forces are frequently deployed for tasks traditionally handled by the police, including crowd control, election security, and crime suppression (Onuoha, 2019). While military deployment may provide short-term stability, it reflects structural weaknesses in the civilian security architecture and raises concerns about human rights, civil-military relations, and democratic oversight.

7.4 Proliferation of Non-State Security Actors

The failure of the police to provide effective and accountable security has encouraged the proliferation of non-state security actors, including vigilante groups, ethnic militias, and private security companies (Hills, 2008). Although these actors may fill immediate security gaps, their operations often lack legal regulation and accountability, contributing to further violence and insecurity. This fragmentation of security provision undermines state authority and complicates democratic governance.

VIII. POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY AND HUMAN SECURITY

From a human security perspective, the failure to police the police has severe consequences for individual safety, dignity, and freedom from fear. Human security shifts the focus of security policy from the protection of the state to the protection of individuals and communities (Buzan &

Hansen, 2009). In Nigeria, police misconduct has transformed the police from guarantors of security into sources of insecurity for many citizens (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

8.1 Social Exclusion and Youth Alienation

Police abuses disproportionately affect young men from economically marginalized communities, reinforcing perceptions of social exclusion and systemic injustice (Akinwale, 2021). These grievances can fuel criminality, violent extremism, and social unrest, creating a vicious cycle of insecurity and repression. From a democratic consolidation perspective, youth alienation undermines political participation and long-term democratic stability.

8.2 Gendered Dimensions of Police Abuse

Gender-based abuses by police officers, including sexual harassment, exploitation, and violence, highlight the gendered impacts of weak accountability mechanisms. Such abuses violate fundamental human rights and deepen mistrust between communities and law enforcement agencies (Amnesty International, 2020). Addressing gendered dimensions of police misconduct is therefore essential for inclusive security governance and democratic consolidation.

8.3 Human Security, Rule of Law, and Democratic Stability

When citizens perceive the police as threats rather than protectors, fear becomes normalized, and reliance on informal security arrangements increases. This undermines the rule of law and weakens democratic institutions. Strengthening police accountability is thus central to advancing human security, restoring trust in state institutions, and consolidating democracy in Nigeria.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICING THE NIGERIAN POLICE

Strengthening police accountability is central to reforming Nigeria's security architecture and consolidating democracy. Addressing the structural weaknesses identified in this study requires a comprehensive, multi-layered approach that integrates legal, institutional, political, and societal reforms. The following recommendations are proposed:

9.1 Strengthen External Civilian Oversight

The Police Service Commission (PSC) should be granted greater institutional autonomy, adequate funding, and enhanced investigative and enforcement powers. Clear separation of responsibilities between the PSC and the police hierarchy is necessary to prevent jurisdictional conflicts and political interference (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2019). Oversight bodies should have the authority to enforce

disciplinary decisions and ensure compliance without undue executive influence.

9.2 Reform Internal Accountability Mechanisms

Internal disciplinary mechanisms such as the Orderly Room Trial should be restructured to enhance transparency, consistency, and fairness. Independent observers, including representatives of civil society, should be allowed to monitor disciplinary proceedings involving serious human rights violations. Whistleblower protection policies must be institutionalized to encourage officers to report misconduct without fear of retaliation (Prenzler & den Heyer, 2015).

9.3 Enhance Judicial Accountability

Access to justice for victims of police abuse should be improved through procedural reforms and the establishment of specialized courts or tribunals for police misconduct cases. Judicial decisions against police officers must be promptly enforced to reinforce the rule of law and deter future abuses. Legal aid mechanisms should be expanded to support victims from marginalized communities (Amnesty International, 2020).

9.4 Strengthen Legislative Oversight

The National Assembly and state legislatures should engage in sustained oversight of policing through regular public hearings, budgetary scrutiny, and mandatory reporting requirements. Legislative oversight should be proactive and institutionalized rather than crisis-driven, thereby reinforcing democratic control over the police (Onuoha, 2019).

9.5 Institutionalize Community-Based Accountability

Community policing initiatives should be redesigned to ensure genuine participation, local ownership, and responsiveness to community security needs. Community oversight forums can serve as informal accountability mechanisms that complement formal institutions, strengthen trust, and improve intelligence gathering (Hills, 2008).

9.6 Address Structural and Welfare Challenges

Improving police welfare, training, and working conditions is essential for reducing corruption and misconduct. However, welfare reforms must be accompanied by strict accountability measures to avoid reinforcing impunity. Professional ethics, human rights education, and democratic policing principles should be central to police training curricula (CLEEN Foundation, 2021).

X. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the policing of the Nigerian Police Force and its implications for Nigeria's security architecture and democratic consolidation. Drawing on democratic policing, institutional accountability, and security sector

governance frameworks, the paper has demonstrated that weak police accountability constitutes a fundamental vulnerability in Nigeria's internal security system. Persistent police unaccountability has eroded public trust, weakened intelligence gathering, encouraged the militarization of internal security, facilitated the proliferation of non-state security actors, and undermined the rule of law.

The findings of the study underscore that police accountability is not merely a technical or administrative issue but a core determinant of democratic consolidation. In democratic societies, the police are entrusted with significant coercive powers that must be exercised within legal and

ethical boundaries. Where these boundaries are violated without consequences, democratic legitimacy is compromised and insecurity deepens. Nigeria's experience illustrates how failures in policing the police can destabilize both security governance and democratic institutions.

The paper concludes that sustainable security and democratic consolidation in Nigeria are unattainable without robust mechanisms to police the police. Strengthening civilian oversight, ensuring institutional transparency, enhancing judicial and legislative accountability, and rebuilding police–community relations are essential steps toward restoring public confidence in law enforcement. Ultimately, reforming Nigeria's security architecture requires reimagining policing as a public service grounded in accountability, human rights, and democratic values.

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