Exploring the Challenges and Possibilities of Pan African International Police Cooperation

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ABSTRACT

In the promotion of global peace and security, police cooperation is considered one of the major pillars. This exploratory qualitative study focuses on the possibilities and challenges that should be overcome in the quest to practicalize the implementation of security policies and other legal instruments relating to police cooperation and collaboration in Africa. Twenty-five top police officers and other security experts in Ghana were selected as participants using snowball approach. The participants were interviewed for their views on international police cooperation focusing on cooperation among the various police forces in Africa. The outcome of the study revealed that the major challenges include financial constraints, language barriers, political interference, and problems associated with information technology systems. Recommendations made to overcome most of the challenges include strengthening the African Union Police (AFRIPOL), intelligence sharing with the aid of advanced information technology, and promoting research on police effectiveness on the African continent.

KEYWORDS

African Union Intervention, Afripol, Effective Policing, Police Cooperation, Political Interference

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary global environment that is afflicted with international organized crimes that threaten the world security is an issue of concern for the formation of continental police forces that will link up to constitute global police cooperation with the goal of combatting crimes through coordinated efforts and the use of information technology (IT) (Szumski, 2015). Discussion on efforts to enhance police cooperation has triggered African leaders to make decisions for a common police standby force through police cooperation that will enhance the effort of maintaining global peace, especially on the African continent but the effort has yielded no effective results since commitment of the leaders on the continent is very low (William, 2016).

Peace and security in Africa have been a major concern since the establishment of Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 after the cold war (Robinson, 2014). The African continent requires the cooperation of all the police forces on the continent to add new dimensions to policing issues with the common objective of achieving effective and rapid response to issues of concern to the police with the support of modern technology. The cooperation engagement can promote and harmonize the

various policies and standards agreed upon by the member states of the AU at the various summits on peace and security in Africa (Van der Spuy, 2009). Even though African leaders have made significant gains in developing political integration and economic gains at the regional levels, the development of formidable police cooperation to promote peace and stability on the continent is facing some challenges including the use of IT (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003).

The challenges resulting from capability gaps have caused the operationalization of the idea of creating pan African police force lagging (Apuuli, 2016). The research gap that motivated this current study is lack of literature on assessment of factors that can promote and/or hinder the establishment of viable African police force that can collaborate and cooperate with other established continental police forces to ensure global peace. In this paper, the researcher seeks to explore the possibilities of having a formidable police cooperation leading to a common standby police organization that is capable of having rapid response, aided by IT, to the numerous criminal activities on the continent and the entire world. The study also considers the challenges hindering the effort of the leadership on the continent to operationalize the decisions on police cooperation taking at the various summits of AU and its organs. The study aims at contributing to the global security as guided by the Problem-Oriented Policing conceptual framework (Goldstein, 1990) by improving the effectiveness of the police service from the perspective of creating a formidable African police service (Goldstein, 1979).

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is guided by the problem-oriented policing (POP) conceptual framework which regards the work of the police as an extraordinary complex situation that requires pragmatic consideration because of its puzzling nature. The POP, developed by Goldstein (1990), is a useful guide for this study because the study is exploring into the complex nature of crime on the continent of Africa that requires police cooperation to combat. Consultative meetings of governments on the African continent to seek peace and security on the continent, since the formation of OAU, have led to the formation of regional associations with a major aim of coming out with a common security force to counteract the activities of criminals on the continent (Rechner, 2006). The regional unions include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the East African Community (EAC), and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). The OAU that metamorphosed to the creation of African Union (AU) in 2002 has contributed to the deployment of regional forces to embark on stabilization missions to countries in the regions ravaged by civil wars and other crimes. For example, in the 1990s, ECOWAS deployed a monitoring group (ECOMOG) that helped to curb the decade of the Liberian Civil War (Lizak, 2016).

Many African states have established bilateral and regional agreements based on cooperation with the view of having a common front to deal and control some specified crimes such as drug and human trafficking, illegal immigration, and small arm controls. The regional agreements also include cooperation that may deepen mutual trust, enhance professional ties, and provide training and education among the cooperating nations (Yamashita, 2012). There are already existing multilateral agreements that can facilitate the cooperation of African states to police the continent. For instance, most of the African states have subscribed to some international agreements with Interpol that is global in nature and operate with common fronts of member states to combat crime (Das & Kratcoski, 2001).

Another possibility of forming a unified police force on the continent of Africa is the cooperation of the police chiefs in West Africa, East Africa, and Southern African with the aim of sharing intelligence, with the support of the advancement in technology, on security issues that threaten the continent (Robinson, 2014). In the 1990s, for instance, the police chiefs' associations formed in Africa included Central African Police Chiefs committee (CCPAC), Eastern African Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (EAPCCO), and West African Police Chiefs Committee (WAPCCO). The main view for the formation of these associations was to seek coordinated means

to deal with crimes that transcend across the borders such as human trafficking, terrorism and illegal arm trade (Rechner, 2006).

Knowledge of the creation of continental police forces through coordinated efforts, such as the formation of European Police Office (EUROPOL) and Police Community of the Americas (AMERIPOL), is another pull factor for the creation of a coordinated police force on the continent of Africa (Kruger et al., 2018). Consultative meetings for the institutionalization of African Police Force, under the auspices of AU mechanism spearheaded by Algeria, led to the official launch of African Police organization known as "AFRIPOL" in May 2016 at Algiers. AFRIPOL is to coordinate with other continental police forces such as EUROPOL, AMERIPOL and the INTERPOL to work towards world peace and security but the organization faces implementation challenges that include commitment of member states (Szumski, 2015; Van der Spuy, 2009).

There are some challenges that hinder the effort of African states cooperating to form a formidable force to police the continent and the global world at large. A major challenge is financial limitations of some of the member states that hinders the utilization of advancement in technology needed to combat crime through intelligence sharing (Piknerova, 2014). The cooperation may need sophisticated means of communication, storage and retrieval systems and may embark on other projects to enhance the operations. The major questions include, how are the member states going to fund the operations? Will there be any dominancy based on financial contributions? The underdevelopment of most African states may push most of the governments to concentrate more on infrastructural development than committing substantial amount of money towards African police cooperation.

Cultural and language complexities may also hinder the cooperation effort (Heijes, 2009). There are different cultural and language complexities that may serve as a barrier to the smooth running of the operations of the police forces that may work with a common front through cooperation. Due to colonization, English and French are the two major official languages used for official communication on the continent. Apart from the two official languages, there are numerous ethnic languages and cultural differences that may pose as danger to the cooperation and may promote lack of trust (Das & Kratcoski, 2001; Charles et al., 2017). Political interference is another challenge of having African police cooperation. In Africa, the police chiefs are appointed through political interference and allegiance (Van der Spuy, 2009). An existing police chief of a nation, committed to the cooperation, may be removed when a new government is appointed and the effort made by the previous police chief toward the cooperation may be thwarted by the new police chief due to the vision of the new police chief (Das & Kratcoski, 2001; Muchie, et al., 2013). Getting the commitment of the citizens of most African states towards African police cooperation may not be encouraging due to political polarizations. The challenges may also be associated with issues of colonization and implementation of some legal instruments (Lemieux, 2013; Tyler & Huo, 2002; Huq et al., 2011).

METHODOLOGY

Police cooperation in combatting crime in Africa is under researched and this study is to explore the possibilities and challenges involved in getting police cooperation to fight crime in Africa and the global world with utilization of modern IT systems. The study used qualitative case study to capture the views of police officers with vast experiences in dealing with Pan African police cooperation. The study took place in Ghana and involved some participants from other parts of Africa. The study used qualitative case study because the researcher aimed at capturing the experiences of the participants grounded in their knowledge of the phenomenon based on cognition in a situation where natural scientific approach is inappropriate to explore the human experience (William, 2010). The researcher considered the criticism that qualitative methods involve subjective bias emanating from personal inclinations of the participants and in view of this threat, reduction approach using internal consistency was used to overcome the subjective personal feelings of the participants (Oliver, 2006). Even though qualitative method has a problem associated with generalizing the research outcome,

quantitative method was disregarded because qualitative case study approach enhances the use of thick rich and vivid description of exploratory studies that seek the views of participants with experiences in police cooperation and collaboration more than quantitative approach (Van der Spuy, 2009). Another justification for the use of qualitative case study was to establish rapport building between the researcher and the participants in order to identify pathways linking the research and interview questions relating to views held on the possibilities and challenges confronting the effective practice of pan-African police cooperation for the improvement of peace and security in Africa and the world at large (Strom & Fagermoen, 2012; Tessier, 2012).

Sample

Exploring the challenges and possibilities of Pan African police cooperation involves getting participants from the African continent with much experience and knowledge in policing and insight into the various efforts made into Pan African police cooperation. A sample of 25 security experts from Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) and other security experts from Ghana participated. KAIPTC was selected because it was established with the mission of training, educating and researching into African peace and security. The Centre has a lot of police and other security experts drawn from different parts of African who work in collaboration to fulfil the mission of the Centre. The Centre provided a platform for the selection of security experts from different parts of Africa possessing the experience needed for thick description of the phenomenon under exploration. Using snowball technique, the author identified and selected other security experts in international police cooperation based in other locations in Ghana.

After discussing the study with some security experts belonging to the International Police Executive Symposium (IPES), an NGO that works in collaboration with the United Nations, the first participant who was one of the top Police officers in Mali but attached to KAIPTC was identified using telephone and the internet facilities. The first participant aided the researcher to identify the second participant and with the aid of participants who consented to be part of the study the author identified the subsequent participants through personal and telephone contacts. The introduction of subsequent subjects by the initial participants aided the researcher to make follow-up calls to identify the subjects who willingly offered themselves as participants and for the necessary arrangements leading to the research interviews. The snowball technique led the researcher to identify eight top security experts outside the Centre but resident in Ghana who willingly offered themselves as study participants. In all, data used for the current study came from 25 participants who were security experts. Seventeen of them were from KAIPTC and eight were police officers, some of which were retired officers from Ghana police Service, belonging to the various security organizations in Ghana and located at various parts of Accra.

The author used snowball technique for the selection of the participants because the population of security experts in the area of pan-African police cooperation is rare (Dawood, 2009). Some researchers criticize the use of snowball as a sampling technique on the ground that the technique falls short of intellectual credibility and underpinnings of random methods conventionally used for data collection. Qualitative researchers refute that assertion and confirm that snowball is the most appropriate sampling technique in qualitative studies with rare population (Dawood, 2009; Draper & Swift, 2010). Using snowball sampling technique aided the researcher to get participants with direct experience in the possibilities and challenges confronting pan-African police cooperation for the study (Pathak, 2007). The built-in bias associated with the use of snowball sampling technique may come from participants with common ideologies emanating from interrelated beliefs and networks (Draper & Swift, 2010). The researcher tried to overcome the challenges by using tact to solicit views from the participants during the interview.

Data Collection

This study used one-on-one interview to collect data from the participants. Dealing with security experts demands confidentiality so the current researcher agreed with the participants to have the interview at the participants preferred location in Accra and agreed to have the interview audio recorded. Average time for each of the interviews was an hour. The interviewer used semi-structured interview guide with initiating items (Creswell, 2008; Gyamfi, 2016; Pereira, 2012) such as, "Kindly share with me your views on the possibilities of having African police cooperation effectively operationalized with the aid of IT." "In your view, what are the challenges confronting the AFRIPOL?" "Why is it that we have many insurgent groups in Africa such as Boko Haram but African police forces are not heard?" The initiating questions enabled the interviewer to control the interview in order to derive meaning from the views of the participants (Aslam et., 2012). The interviewer asked follow-up questions emanating from the responses received from the participants (Mehta, 2012, Pereira, 2012). The current study asked the follow-up questions in a psychological and motivating context (Aslam et al., 2012) to explore areas of challenges and possibilities of having effective police cooperation in Africa for the discharge of police duties in Africa and other parts of the world (Gill et al., 2014). Triangulation is an essential component of improving the trustworthiness of a qualitative study and in view of that the study used observation of body language and note-taking during the interview. The observer took notes of the body language of the participants during the interview to ascertain proper meaning of what the participants said. To improve the trustworthiness of the study, soon after every interview the interviewer craved the indulgence of the participants to help in validation of the transcripts of their interviews. The study used member checking approach to ensure data verification and also seek the members consent for the use of data gathered from them for further analysis.

Analysis

After the interview phase of the study the observer sent the interview transcripts relating to the participants for member checking, confirmation, and approval. Using deductive logic means, the author of this study coded the confirmed interview transcripts, notes from observations during the interview and the literature reviewed using words or phrases to represent the essence of the data gathered. The author of this study made further analysis of the data by importing the coded data into NVivo 10 qualitative software that tested the trends of the coded messages and sorted the messages into categories. The software supported the creation of nodes by highlighting the test with commonalities that generated the resultant themes (Hacker, 2006).

FINDINGS

Reiterative approach used to analyze and categorize the captured data context, with the aid of NVivo 10 qualitative software, created the following three categories:

1. Police cooperation mechanism
2. Possibilities of cooperation
3. Cooperation challenges

The following thematic analysis emerged after using inductive approach, with the support of the qualitative software, for the analysis of the source of data that led to the identification of the following resultant themes.

African Police Cooperation Mechanism

The research findings revealed that there are some mechanisms in place that could bring many African countries together to foster unity through regional and multilateral agreements. Majority of

the participants reiterated that on regional basis, there are associations already in existence that could influence the establishment of African police cooperation. A participant stated:

There are regional bodies like ECOWAS for West African states, ECCAS for Central African states, and SADC for Southern African states already in place that can facilitate the required cooperation. Interpol is another body that can support the cooperation with intelligence sharing.

Possibilities of Effective Pan-African Police Cooperation

The findings from this study revealed that there are many factors supporting the effective implementation of the major decisions taking to enhance African police cooperation for the promotion of peace and security on the African continent. African Union (AU), in its quest to promote peace and security on the continent of Africa has held many summits to promote the formation of African Union Police (AFRIPOL) with the understanding of creating a unified police force that would work to promote peace and security on the continent. A participant revealed:

The African Union (AU) is a formidable force that can push for the implementation of the many bilateral agreements of the member states on African police cooperation. I am of the view that the AU police must be strengthened with the commitment of the leaders who meet to take such decisions. Technology is advancing that can support intelligence sharing.

Majority of the participants expressed their feelings on the extent of crimes on the continent that should be of concern and motivation to move for African police cooperation. A participant retorted with a deep tone:

My friend look, at the various regional unions on the continent, why cannot they use the regional unions such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), The Arab Maghreb Union (AMG), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to foster the police relations on the continent to combat the menace bedeviling our continent?

There was an indication from a participant that in the 1990s ECOWAS was able to foster a unity to resolve the Liberia heinous crises. A participant stated:

We all heard about what was going on in Liberia during the civil war crises in the 1990s and how ECOWAS came out with a force, ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), to end the fight so can we mobilize AU police forces to deal with similar problems on the continent.

A participant was of the view that the cooperation could foster intelligence sharing among the various police forces on the continent. According to the participant, intelligence sharing through the Interpol and IT was doing well in some parts of Africa and the cooperation could enhance the work of the Interpol in combating crime on the African continent and the world at large. Another factor of concern highlighted through the study was promoting research on effective policing on the African continent. According to some of the participants, research on security and policing issues could be promoted through the cooperation of the various regional unions. A participant asked a question, "Why is it that criminals like drug traffickers are always ahead of us?" The answer provided by the participant was that they strategize and research. Another participant was more concerned with the establishment of regional police institutions of higher learning that could operate collaboratively on the continent to educate and train the police officers from Africa and other parts of the world. According to the participant, police

officers could receive training and education that could enhance their performance from different parts of the African continent.

Challenges Confronting African Police Cooperation

African police cooperation has been on discussion for decades leading to the establishment of many agreements such as those being championed by Algeria on the establishment of African Police known as "AFRIPOL" which was ratified at the 28th summit of AU held at Addis Ababa somewhere in 2017. A minority of the participants were of the view that most of the challenges confronting the coming together of the police forces on the continent came from some individuals with the view of satisfying their personal interest. A participant retorted, "Dealing with 'powerful people' who make financial gains by fomenting wars and other heinous crimes poses a challenge to the work of the police on the continent." Political interference was considered as a factor that hinders the effort of having effective African police cooperation. A participant was of the view that in most of the countries in Africa, Police Chiefs are appointed by ruling governments and as soon as a new Police Chief is appointed the commitment made by the previous police chief towards having a pan-African police cooperation becomes thwarted. A participant from KAIPTC indicated that one of the challenges was about the different security structures on the continent. The expert indicated that, "Different structures of the security system on the continent may be a hindrance. In some countries in Africa there is no clear-cut demarcation of duties among the military, police, and other security forces."

Majority of the study partners raised the issue of financial constraints hindering the use of IT and language barrier as some of the challenges confronting police cooperation on the continent. A participant retorted:

Consider the language barrier between Ivory Coast (La Cote Devoir) and Ghana and how the language barrier hinders effort to communicate effectively, even if the communication is aided by IT. In some instances, people at the border use the local dialect that is common to them to communicate. Now consider the problem that Ghanaians who do not speak French go through. Intelligence sharing at the border may be a problem.

Most of the participants raised the issues associated with how to implement the security policies and other legal instruments from various jurisdictional areas of the continent. Issues of corruption among the police officers was another area of concern that the participants raised.

DISCUSSION

Findings of the study indicate that African police cooperation is a laudable police approach suitable for the continent and more initiatives considered to get improvement in policing on the continent through police cooperation. According to Robertson (2014) and Rechner (2006), many initiatives by many African states toward getting a formidable police cooperation for the peace and security on the continent have been established. The current study highlights some of the measures already in existence towards the cooperation. In line with the findings of Van der Spuy (2009), this study revealed that on the continent of Africa, cooperation of police chiefs, including WAPCCO, CCPAC, and EAPCCO, have tried in diverse ways to combat transnational organized crimes such as drug and human trafficking, terrorism, and illegal trade arms but the effort made was fraughted with many challenges. Globally, there is Interpol that works to policing the world. Formidable African police cooperation could collaborate with the Interpol and other regional bodies such as AMERIPOL, and EUROPOL to help maintain global peace and sustainable security as this study, supported by the findings of Szumski (2015) and Kruger et al. (2018), reveals. The study discloses that under the auspices of AU, the launching of AFRIPOL took place in 2016 and ratified at the 28th summit of AU

held at Addis Ababa in May 2017. Among the numerous benefits for the cooperation, as revealed by this study, are the sharing of intelligence, improvement in reduction of crime globally, enhancement of police research on the continent, education and training of police officers for effective policing, and combatting the act of terrorism on the continent with a common front.

Among the factors considered by the participants is the use of emerging technologies to facilitate the work of the standby police force. This revelation is inline with the views expressed by Goldstein (1979), the main proponent of problem-oriented-policing conceptual framework. The framework considers the end product of the effort of police cooperation in dealing effectively with the maintenance of peace and order as significant and positive. Using emerging technologies, a formidable African police force could contribute to the world peace and security by linking up with other regional forces such as the Europol and the Interpol to combat crime. Technologies such as the use of Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems, global positioning satellites, and other police surveillance systems could enhance the effort of the formidable force to achieve the aim of contributing toward the global peace (Foster, 2005; Staub, 2019).

Despite the numerous possibilities of African police cooperation highlighted by the study, there are some challenges confronting effective police cooperation in Africa. Among the challenges revealed by this study is gaining full commitment of African governments to the cooperation. Many African states are now developing and the democratic governments prefer spending more on infrastructural development than on continental security. At AU summits the major issues that the leaders consider are economic and political and the use of IT and policing becomes a secondary issue. Even though the governments talk about peace and security at AU and other regional summits, discussion on having police cooperation at regional meetings predates 1963 when OAU was formed and it was only in 2016 that AFRIPOL was launched at Algiers and ratified at AU meeting in Addis Ababa in 2017. Not much financial commitment has been made by AU member states towards having effective police cooperation as revealed by Piknerova (2014).

Majority of this research participants identified financial and IT constraints as major factors impeding the efforts of having formidable African police cooperation. Politico-cultural factors such as having many different local languages on the continent and the belief and value system of the people on the continent are contributing factors toward the cooperation as revealed by this study and supported by Das & Kratcoski (2001). In most of the African countries, the appointment of Police Chiefs (Inspector General of Police) is based on political allegiance and efforts that some Police Chiefs make towards African police cooperation are truncated when there is a political regime change as Van der Spuy (2008) and Das & Kratcoski (2001) reveal and confirmed by this study.

This study explored the capability gaps in literature hindering the promotion of formidable pan African police force that could collaborate and cooperate with other inter-continental police forces. The study assessed the various possibility factors and challenges that could ensure the promotion of African continental police force that could contribute significantly towards achieving global peace. This exploratory study has contributed significantly to literature by revealing the various factors that could enhance the promotion and establishment of formidable pan African police cooperation.

POLICY IMPLICATION

The study outcome has revealed the need for the various police services/forces on the African continent to contribute to the global security through the creation of effective African Police (AFRIPOL) service. The outcome of the study highlights on the need for intelligence sharing, improvement of police research, training and education facilitated by the use of emerging technologies to enhance policing on the African continent and the world as a whole. The creation of such a formidable force will enhance the effort of policing even if there is information technology and communication failure since the police effort could still be made through other means of collaboration. The study also identified some challenges impeding the effort of establishing a formidable African police service

that could contribute to global peace and security. The challenges, as revealed by this study, include financial constraints, cultural differences among the numerous ethnic groups on the continent, politics, and the value systems of the people on the continent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that to overcome most of the challenges AU must strengthen the African Union Police (AFRIPOL) with the aid of IT systems and ensure that member countries work towards the sustenance of the continental body for peace and stability on the continent and the world at large. The police chiefs must intensify intelligence sharing among the police forces/services and promote research on police effectiveness on the African continent. The study also recommends that the appointment of police chiefs by the political heads that promotes political allegiance to the ruling governments should cease and better structures for the appointment considered through a legal framework that could make policing free from political allegiance which is a legacy of colonialism on the African continent. It is also recommended that governments should commit financial resources towards African police cooperation for effective policing. The author of this study also recommends that future research on global peace should focus on the need for the integration of all the regional police forces/services globally to effectively deal with the problems confronting the increase of transnational organized crimes. In this study, much emphasis is on the use of information technology and communication to enhance policing. The question now posed by this study is, "what happens if there is information technology and communication (IT) failure?" This study, therefore, recommends that future studies by scientific scholars should look into the issues of IT failure and impact on regional police cooperation in dealing with transnational organized crimes.

CONCLUSION

This exploration into African police cooperation reveals the possibilities and challenges of having effective African police cooperation. The study findings bring to bear the effort that most African states could make towards having a formidable police cooperation with the aid of IT systems to curb the menace of terrorism and other transnational organized crimes that threaten the continent of Africa and the entire global world. Through AU the commitment of African leaders towards improving the peace and security on the continent led to the launch of AFRIPOL in 2016. This study reveals the essence of having a formidable police force with the aim of operating in collaboration with the INTERPOL, AMERIPOL, and EUROPOL to ensure effective policing. The challenges that confront African police cooperation that the study reveals include financial constraints, political allegiance of police chiefs, cultural differences among the states, and gaining full commitment of political heads towards effective African police cooperation.

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