

Roles of Police in Conflict Management: A Critical Review of Literature

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Abstract: This paper reviews the roles of police in conflict management to situate the police in peace and security obligations in the world. Police as first responders to national crises ranging from crime, domestic and public violence, terrorism and international conflict have to be able to handle conflicts at all levels. The review clarifies roles of police in maintaining peace and tranquillity of states regarding these conflict situations. It also discusses the available opportunities which the police can exploit to guarantee sustainable and inextinguishable internal peace and security amidst a myriad of challenges, problems and issues regarding peace and security. Using the Critical Literature Review method, the authors established that police actions either exacerbate the polarity between conflicting parties through unreflective actions that escalate conflicts or manage to resolve the issues through strategic actions aimed at achieving broad objectives for peace and tranquillity. The involvement of police in international and regional peacekeeping missions also places the police in the broader perspective of international conflict management. Through participating and collaborating with other stakeholders who include intergovernmental organisations, other state security agencies, non-governmental organizations and private players, the roles of the police in conflict management span local, regional and international levels. Individual actions of police officers while executing their duties are also crucial. Therefore, the authors recommend that Police officers should be trained in conflict management and international relations at the grass-root level to conscientise them on peace and security matters. Further empirical studies are required to evaluate the police's readiness and competency in conflict management.

Keywords: Conflict, Conflict Management, Mass Protests, Peace and Security, Police, Terrorism

I. INTRODUCTION

Conflict and society have co-existed since the cradle of mankind. It is a constant factor in human existence. Conflicts occur at different levels which include; intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup, intergroup, and international levels. In yesteryears, conflicts were managed and resolved by the elderly and community leaders within traditional structures in which they occurred. The complexities of conflicts characterising the contemporary world have placed greater demands on police organisations to intervene and manage the conflicts. As police organisations grapple with these conflicts, it becomes apparent that they should develop clear and sustainable strategies to successfully

manage conflict situations. Failure to manage conflicts is itself ominous to the wellbeing of the citizenry and unmanaged conflicts usually degenerate to worse scenarios like Civil Wars, Inter-State Wars and even World Wars.

Conceptualisation of Conflict Management

To understand conflict management it is important to first explain what conflict itself is. According to Diez et al, (2006) conflict refers to a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals. In the broadest of terms, conflict indicates the incongruity of subject positions. This definition emphasises the antagonism or incompatibility being at the heart of the conflict and initially leaves open the exact nature of these incompatibilities. Albanian Police Standard Procedure (2017) as cited in Agastra (2018:47) says "Conflict is related with any situation in which two or more parties feel they have mutually incompatible intentions". This definition shows that intervention levels for conflict management do not only apply at the individual level but conflictual situations at various levels. Police may be required to intervene to manage conflicts at different levels.

While various strategies are available to contain or end the conflict, the terms conflict management and conflict resolution are often used interchangeably, but it is important to draw a line between the two so that there is clarity of what conflict management is and what it is not. Wang et al (2007) point out that conflict resolution is focused on eliminating conflict. Paul and Brahma (2017) concur by indicating that "conflict resolution involves more analytical and problem-solving approach by identifying fundamental factors behind the conflict". According to Paul and Brahma (2017), conflict management is an approach that is merely targeted at containing or controlling a conflict when chances for resolution are remote. Thus, conflict resolution is an approach to end conflicts by dealing with the ideals and factors underlying conflicts while conflict management involves approaches used to contain a conflict from becoming dysfunctional.

According to Deutch and Coleman (2006), some of the potential causes of conflict include differences in knowledge, beliefs and basic values, competition for power and recognition, a drive for autonomy, personal dislike;

differences in goals, diverse economic interests, and loyalties to groups. Conflict may also result from uncertainties, class struggles, ideological differences and or lack of value consensus (D'Anieri, 2009). Real and Sousa (2018:46), add an international perspective to causes of conflicts by indicating some of the root causes of conflict and insecurity as "climate change, competition over resources, marginalization of the majority of the world and global militarization". Some conflicts arise as identity clashes or ideational differences (Cherney et al., 2019). This means that there is a wide range of causes of conflict between individuals and groups of people.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are different schools of thought around the subject of conflict as postulated by Lumumba-Kasongo (2019). Consciousness to these schools of thought impacts on conflict management approaches by the police since the police have responsibility for conflict management at all levels. These schools of thought also help to determine the roles of the police and to reflect on the implications of their actions to conflict management. Their role demands them to respond to peace and security disturbances as well as to participate in conflict management efforts at national, regional and international levels.

Lumumba-Kasongo (2019) provides several theories by which conflicts can be analysed such as traditionalist or classical, liberalist, structuralist, constructivist, or interactionist theories. These theories are also critical in understanding the causes as well as the management of conflicts. Policing approaches should reflect these theories for effective conflict management. Traditionalist or realist perspective is concerned by power politics of a material nature, whilst liberalism fosters cooperation and democratic principles to prevent or manage conflicts. Goldstein and Peevehouse (2011) and Butler (2009) postulate that structuralist theories look at societal structures from a micro to a macro level to determine how social institutions, social strata and global inequalities contribute to conflict and peace. Abdelal (2009) also avers that ideational factors, either constructivist or interactionist views, focus on how ideas, beliefs, identity, and phenomenological forces influence conflict as well as on how they contribute to conflict management. Lumumba-Kasongo (2019) recaps the range in which conflict may be conceived. The failure to reflect on these perspectives in practice by police may be catastrophic and lead to more severe conflicts.

Overview of Police Roles in Conflict Management

Worldwide, police are mandated by their governments to, among other things, uphold and enforce the law fairly, and to protect life, liberty, property, human rights, and dignity of the members of the public. They work to promote and preserve public order as well as to protect internal security by detecting and preventing terrorist activities, to thwart militant activities and any form of violence affecting the tranquillity of the state (Cherney & Cherney, 2018). Police have a responsibility

to prevent crimes and reduce the opportunities for the commission of crimes through preventive measures and strategies like community policing and inter-agency approach to policing to foster cooperation with other stakeholders for the good of society. Agastra (2018) indicates that police intervention in conflict situations is targeted primarily at preventing conflicts from escalating and causing physical, economic and psychological damage. This is buttressed by Thompson and Hudson (2017) who posit that order maintenance by police is concerned with making sure that situations do not get out of hand. The authors review the roles of police in conflicts of various types and levels.

III. ROLE OF POLICE IN MANAGING INTRAPERSONAL CONFLICT

Intra-personal conflict is the primary level of police intervention. This conflict occurs when an individual is not at peace with himself, and it often involves some form of goals conflict or cognitive conflict. Intra-personal conflicts happen every day to most people throughout their lives but are mainly detectable at the end when they manifest through suicides. Police are thus, increasingly called upon to respond to situations involving mental health emergencies such as these. According to WHO (2019) police occupy an important role in community-based suicide prevention: by ensuring that persons with mental disorders receive appropriate mental health treatment, by removing access to lethal means from people at high risk of suicide, and by recognizing the suicide potential in situations involving domestic disputes or where potentially deadly force is exercised. First responders are in a unique position to determine the course and outcome of suicidal crises. Suicides can be reduced in the community by ensuring that first-line responders are appropriately trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness, to identify the risks of suicide, and to understand local mental health legislation and how it can be applied to manage the situations. Police must respond with requisite psychosocial and counselling skills to alter the thinking of suicidal individuals so that they develop pro-life attitudes.

Role of Police in Managing Interpersonal Conflict

Preventing crime has been proposed as the fundamental aspect of conflict management. Crimes are by their very nature, a form of conflict between two or more people who are oftentimes, referred to as the accused and the complainant, aggressor or the aggrieved. At this level, the conflict is normally presented to the authorities by the complainant or the aggrieved party. Police find themselves having to respond to a wide range of crimes such as theft, assaults, robbery, and domestic violence among others. These can be regarded as minor crimes as they are normally classified as crimes against individuals. According to Agastra (2018), the role of police, therefore, is to bring on board an array of strategies to contain these potentially dangerous conflict situations. This, they do by bringing the warring parties together through different strategies which include community-policing. Zacker and

Bard (1973) as cited in Agastra (2018) call for training of police officers in areas of communication, empathy, and self-awareness to be able to deal with conflict situations effectively. This enhances their techniques to calm down situations and to institute proper action procedures when they receive a report about a conflict situation.

Using authority as a strategy, police take charge of the situation and without seeking suggestions from anyone, manage conflicts through the use of force and effect arrests of the perpetrators. The other strategy at the disposal of the police to manage conflict at the interpersonal level is the arbitration strategy where parties to the conflict agree that police be the arbitrator. The police manage the conflict by suggesting a solution which the parties in conflict may accept or reject by appealing to a higher authority, usually the courts. Further, police can employ negotiation as a strategy for managing interpersonal conflicts to achieve a win-win solution for the warring parties. While it is common knowledge that police will never eradicate crime, their response to criminal activities goes a long way in reducing these conflicts.

Roles of Police in Managing Social & Intergroup Conflicts

In executing their constitutional mandate, police deal with social conflicts that affect the generality of the population especially in cases of civil strife. Police are always required to attend to conflicts involving different groups in society. Pressure groups, workers unions, action groups and civil society may stimulate unrest in the society in their attempts to bring about social change or advance particular social or political goals. Vivid examples of social and intergroup conflicts which the police deal with on routine or specified operations include terrorism, public violence and or mass protests. These can cause severe damages and upset the peace and security environment locally and at the international level. Terrorism is an international concern that may require collective security efforts from regional and international organisations. Mass protests are also topical in international conflict management because of their potential of drawing the international community concerns especially in the area of human rights, and government tolerance or repression of civil action. In this section, a focused review is made to detail the roles of police in managing mass protests and in counterterrorism.

Mass protests and the roles of the police

According to Eltantawy and Wiest (2012), mass protests are a significant force that perturbs the political organization in a country. Saad-Filho (2013) states that mass protests encompass a wider cross-section of the entire population which includes the youth, students, workers, political activists, media, and other action groups in society. Lumumba-Kasongo (2019) presents that mass protests are manifestations of adversarial relations among various societal groups. Protesters usually express their frustrations over a wide range of issues including governance, social and economic conditions,

corruption and workers' grievances. Mass protests are usually non-partisan but they can easily be captured by other groups with different political agendas. Terrorist groups can also take advantage of mass protests to unleash terror on targeted sections of the population or the government.

There is a long history of mass-protests across the whole world. According to Saad-Filho (2013), in Brazil, mass protests triggered mobilizations that toppled the government in 1984. Similar protests have occurred in Arabic countries; Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Iran, Sudan and other parts of the world. The protests in Arabic countries dubbed the Arab Spring, have either triggered armed conflicts or deposed the ruling governments (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2012).

In Zimbabwe, such protests occurred in 1997 and 1998 organized by workers unions to protest against the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) induced hardships for workers. A recurrence of such conflicts occurred in 2016 and January 2019 dubbed #ShutdownZim and #tjamuka where a cross-section of the society protested against harsh economic conditions and governance issues (Mutanana, 2016; Hove & Chenzi, 2020). In 2018, Zimbabwe also experienced post-election protests in the capital which ended in severe damage to property and skirmishes between the protesters and the security forces. These skirmishes led to the deaths of six civilians. A commission of inquiry instituted shortly after the incidents concluded that the Zimbabwe Republic Police was incapacitated to deal with protests of that magnitude (Commission of Inquiry Into the 1st of August 2018 Post-Election Violence, 2018; Mlotshwa, 2019).

Factors to consider for mass protest policing

To strategically manage mass protests and prevent damage to property or threats to human life, the police should consider several factors, even the seemingly petite requests or demands made by protesters. Saad-Filho (2013) shows some factors that should be considered when dealing with mass protests and these include; the number of protesters or size of protest groups, key participants or organizers of the protests, slogans and enchantments, statements, requests, the location where protesters assemble, level of violence and damage being caused, nature of property or persons being targeted as well as methods or media being used for mobilizing protesters. Following the study by Lockwood et al. (2018), it is also crucial to consider how the public perceives the police in the form of legitimacy, fairness, and respect. This helps to analyse the attitudes and behaviour of protesters towards the police. Combined, these factors inform the police on the nature of grievances, objectives, composition of protesters and seriousness of the protest. Police can, therefore, predict the likely outcomes of such protests to prepare sufficiently on how to manage conflicts to mitigate the damage likely to occur.

Specific roles of the police in managing mass protests

McPhail, Schweingruber and McCarthy (2018) proclaim that by modern standards the actions of the police are under scrutiny and are also essential in understanding protests repertoires. For example, mass protests in Tunisia in 2010 were triggered by the death of Khaled Said after being brutalized by the police. The success of the protests in Tunisia is believed to have also intensified the Egyptian protests (Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011). The black lives matter worldwide movement was also triggered by the killing of a black man; George Floyd, by four white police officers during their routine duties. As frustrations grew in America with intense protests, the actions of the four police officers caused worldwide outrage and protests in various countries over racism and human rights violations by police in America. The incident not only triggered mass protests but shifts in foreign policies between America and other countries (Dave et al., 2020). Therefore, the police should be guided by international and local human rights standards when managing mass protests to maintain law and order.

World trends for policing mass protests or public disorder management have shifted from the use of force to what McPhail et al. (2018) describes as the negotiated management approach. This ensures that the police do not necessarily block the protesters' constitutional rights to demonstrate for a just cause since it is believed that protests can be accommodated as efforts of protesters to bring social change. This approach entails that the police negotiate with the demonstrators before the demonstration so that there are minimum conflicts with the police (McPhail et al., 2018). However, there are challenges with this approach if protesters do not recognize the police as legitimate. In such cases, even when the negotiated management approach is used, cases of lawbreaking and civil disobedience occurring during protests are inevitable and the police are required to exercise their constitutional mandate of maintaining law and order, detecting and investigating crime, preserving security and safeguarding property and protecting lives of the people, which may demand the use of minimum force (Zimbabwe Constitution, 2013). McPhail et al. (2018) aver that these obligations should be fulfilled within specific guidelines which include; observing constitutional rights of protesters, tolerance to pretests, clear and continuous communication between police and protesters, and lawful arrests.

IV. COUNTERTERRORISM AND THE ROLES OF THE POLICE

According to Chestnut (2020:14), counterterrorism is the state's fight against the "three evil forces of terrorism, separatism, and extremism". Governments sign agreements on War against terrorism at regional and international levels. Governments, through their agencies, are involved in counterterrorism at different levels. The police as first-line responders and primary law enforcement agents are involved in counterterrorism at primary as well as higher levels. To

conceptualise the role of the police in counterterrorism, it is needful to deconstruct the term terrorism first.

Terrorism is one of the serious crimes and threats to international peace and security. It is a highly political activity, and because of that, one that is difficult to define. Akinola and Tella (2013) indicate that terrorism is underpinned either by the right or leftist political notions. More so, terrorists do not consider themselves terrorists but see themselves as liberators or revolutionaries. This is a teleological view used by terrorists to justify their actions and the view can also be used to garner passive or active support for terrorists from minority groups in the society basing on either a religious, political or ethnic divide (Cherney et al., 2019). These circumstances may also pose challenges for the police to deal with terrorism.

Further complicating the issue, Chomsky (2002) in Akinola and Tella (2013) puts terrorism into two categories; retail terrorism and wholesale terrorism. Retail terrorism is carried out by individual organisations whilst wholesale terrorism is carried out by the state and its agencies. The Weberian concept of the state monopoly on the use of violence presented by Butler (2009) resonates with Chomsky's concept of wholesale terrorism, in which the state through its agencies; the police or the army, reserves the right to use violence on the population to protect specific political interests. This raises questions about the state or its agencies' legitimacy! Legitimacy issues may be raised by some sections of the society or the international community concerning the state's counterterrorism measures. According to OSCE (2014), the legitimacy of the state is questioned if the state through its agencies, 'unleashes terror' on its citizens in violation of international human rights standards. Police legitimacy is a factor that influences public cooperation to counterterrorism efforts (Boateng & Boateng, 2018) and the implication of these views makes terrorism a construct whose definition is underpinned by phenomenological interpretations (Botha, 2010; Abdelal, 2009).

Despite the definitional issues around the concept of terrorism, scholarly definitions are provided to assist in arriving at a contextual meaning of terrorism in this text. Laqueur (1996:25) define terrorism as "the sub-state application of violence or threatened violence intended to sow panic in a society, to weaken or even overthrow the incumbents, and to bring about political change." The US Department of Defense in Akinola and Tella (2013:72) defines terrorism as "the calculated use of unlawful violence to inculcate fear intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious or ideological." Another definition by the FBI in Akinola and Tella (2013) specifies terrorism as "the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce the civilian population or any segment of society thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives." Dodeye (2016:173) defines terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated, use,

threatened use, of violence to induce a state of terror in its immediate victims, often to influence another less reachable audience such as a government". To determine what constitute terrorism, the acts of violence can be evaluated in terms of the law as well as the motive behind the violence. The essential elements of the crime of terrorism must point to unlawfulness, as well as political motives or social objectives behind the attack because not all violent crimes amount to terrorism. In keeping with law enforcement, other crimes associated with terrorism include kidnapping, murder, public violence, bombing, and smuggling.

Specific roles of police in counterterrorism

Hills and Hills (2006) posit that local police are involved in counterterrorism primarily through routine crime prevention as well as through higher-order policing strategies such as undercover operations and counterterrorism operations to detect and disrupt terrorist activities and communications. Since the 9/11 attacks terrorism has become a domestic and transnational concern across the whole world (Waxman, 2009). Counterterrorism measures have since been tightened in America, Europe, Middle East and Africa with new threats from ISIS and Jihadist terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and Boko Haram unleashing despicable terror on the population and government institutions. In Africa, Nigeria's Boko Haram and other Islamist extremist groups have attacked several institutions including churches, schools, police stations, and also abducted hundreds of young girls (Dodeye, 2016). In Zimbabwe, the bomb attack at a ZANU (PF) rally at White-City Stadium in Bulawayo in June 2018 shows that terrorism is not an isolated phenomenon. In that regard, police do not take any chances with terrorism (BBC News, 2018).

Davis, Helmus, Hunt, Payne, Jahed and Tsang (2016) present that police prevent terrorism as law enforcement agents through their routine patrols, and criminal investigations. Counterterrorism strategies in police routine operations include surveillance and guarding of key and vital installations likely to be targeted by terrorists. Davis et al. (2016) also say that police patrol border posts to monitor immigration processes and detect suspicious activities. This is imperative since weapons may be smuggled into countries through official and unofficial border entry points. Waxman (2009) indicates that police duties for counterterrorism also include intelligence gathering, protection of persons and infrastructure, emergency assistance after attacks, public order-maintenance during and after attacks, mitigation of damage, and criminal investigation of incidents. Kearns (2020) says policing terrorism should not be different from policing other crimes if it is integrated into the community policing initiatives used at local levels. This way the police can identify and dismantle terrorist plots as well as arrest suspected terrorists. At a higher level, police are also deployed to international duties for peacebuilding and peacekeeping missions in post-conflict zones where terrorist attacks are highly likely to recur for example, in Sudan, Liberia, Somalia, and Guinea-Bissau, armed rebel groups have propagated

armed government dissensions some of which ended in protracted civil wars. In other countries, for example in Nigeria, police deal with high incidences of terrorism at a local level to prevent terrorism and protect populations from attacks (Oguonu & Ezeibe, 2014).

Besides resource constraints and coordinating challenges for dealing with violent conflicts at domestic, governmental, regional and intergovernmental levels as postulated by Akinola and Tella (2013), police remain instrumental in dealing with violent conflicts as law enforcement agencies. There are a few instances where there are national conflict resolution structures which do not emphasize a military approach. The issue with this scenario is that counterterrorism emphasizes the use of force or violence to deal with terrorism forgetting that some conflicts are intractable because they are deeply rooted in social values, culture and religion based on deep-seated convictions about right and wrong. Therefore without instituting structures for dealing with social complexities or analyzing the socio-cultural, political and economic contexts fuelling violent conflict, police will never win the war on violent conflict (Dodeye, 2016).

Role of Police in Managing International Conflict

At the international level, police roles are as enunciated in the United Nation's mission which states that the role of the police is to enhance international peace and security by supporting the member states experiencing conflict or, in post-conflict and other crises to realize effective, efficient, representative, responsive and accountable police services that serve and protect the population. Police, therefore, have a responsibility to ensure world peace is maintained and sustained through the deployment of its officers to conflict zones in line with the United Nations guidelines. According to the United Nations Police (2018), the roles and functions of police include but are not limited to;

the provision of advisory and technical assistance to the local police on conflict prevention and conflict resolution, provision of advisory support to the local police in translating strategic policies into concrete action for the smooth implementation of capacity-building projects through advising, coaching, mentoring and training, provision of advisory support to the local police in the formulation and implementation of internal procedures and mechanisms to enable the effective, accountable and professional crime management and crime prevention practices, assisting the local law enforcement in crime trend analysis and the development of relevant anti-crime strategies and to provide technical advice and assistance to the local police on countering all types of crime including such crimes as illicit trafficking in narcotics, sexual and gender-based violence, transnational and organized crime.

Implications to Police

The authors propose a multi-sectoral approach to conflict management. To achieve this, there should be a National Peace and Security Framework (NPSF) at local levels to look into security issues and create links among various stakeholders which include the police and other security agencies, intergovernmental bodies, non-governmental organisations, the private corporate world and civil society organisations to represent interests of various societal groups. With police as a major stakeholder in this framework, it would be easier to discuss security issues from a broader perspective and to find sustainable conflict management strategies. Constant interactions between the police and other players enhance the legitimacy of the police in the public eye. This framework is created in the interest of national peace and security, but the effects of such an initiative have obvious benefits for regional and international peace. Figure 1, illustrates the proposed Integrated Conflict Management Approach (ICMA) showing Police and Interpol as team players in the National Peace and Security Framework.

The Integrated Conflict Management Approach (ICMA)



Figure 1: Integrated Conflict Management Approach (ICMA)

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that without police interventions, individual peace, as well as world peace, will remain an elusive concept. Managing conflict at the intra-personal level requires that police train its members on psychosocial and counselling skills for them to render professional services to those individuals with suicidal tendencies. The training of police will, therefore, go a long way in reducing what the WHO (2009) described as street-corner psychiatrists. At the inter-personal level police should be trained in progressive conflict management strategies like negotiation, arbitration and counselling. Furthermore, police should shift from the use of force to negotiated conflict management approach if they are to successfully manage conflicts. At the inter-group level police are to demonstrate legitimacy first before any attempts are made on quelling mass protests. Legitimacy is the belief by the policed that the

police are just, fair, appropriate and that their exercise of power is lawful (Kearns, 2020). This belief instils a sense of willingness and compliance on protesters as they may feel that while they have a reason to demonstrate, police also have an obligation to ensure that demonstrations are peaceful. At international levels, police organisations have and continue to fly their flags high in so far as peace and security is concerned. Notwithstanding their success, there is a need for police officers to be trained and nurtured on conflict management as well as international relations if long-lasting peace is to be achieved.

V. CONCLUSION

The realisation of peace through conflict management and conflict resolution strategies is a responsibility which transcends police organisations. Conflict management is the responsibility of states, governmental organisations and other non-governmental organisations. Governments, through their agencies, should take a leading role in the maintenance of peace as lack of it can have ripple effects on the political, economic and social wellbeing of the world at large.

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