Factors Impeding the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force in the Maintenance of Law and Order

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Abstract: The Police Force in Nigeria maintains law and order as part of their duties. Unfortunately, the citizens have had unpalatable experiences and stories to tell about the escapades of the Police while carrying out their duties. There is no gain saving the fact that the performance of Nigeria Police Force is unsatisfactory due partly to integrity issues and inadequate funding. Their attitude seems to reflect the society and environment in which they operate, and this has led to a lot of criticisms that have reached a dangerous height. The work employs doctrinal and content analysis of relevant literature in this area. This paper identifies some factors that impede the efficiency and effectiveness of the Police Force in Nigeria in the maintenance of law and order. It finds that even though their efficiency and effectiveness are hindered by so many problems, there is still hope of the Police Force attaining the desired focus. For example, with the establishment of a Police Trust Fund, with credible and competent people in charge, law abiding citizens of Nigeria may begin to experience a more professional, responsible and responsive Police Force with a changed narrative.

Keywords: Police force, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Law and order, Nigeria.

I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of maintenance of law and order in any society cannot be over-emphasised. When a society is secure and peaceful, it enjoys rapid economic and social development. But a restive and insecure society is a breeding ground for chaos, lawlessness and anarchy, hence, the need for a vibrant, efficient and effective Police Force that can maintain law and order in society, and ensure peaceful coexistence among citizens in a secure and safe environment. Without Police intervention, the society would become a jungle. Truly, the best is expected from the Nigeria Police Force. How be it, the Police in Nigeria seem to reflect the society and environment in which they operate, and this has led to a lot of criticisms that have reached a dangerous height. Be that as it may, any worthy policeman knows that the society expects him to render quality security service. Unfortunately, the Nigerian society is facing serious problems such as, insecurity, armed robberies, kidnappings, murders, political assassinations among others; while the Police are involved in various vices especially bribery and other corrupt practices. They thereby undermine efficient and effective policing for the maintenance of law and order. One therefore wonders if the Police Force in Nigeria has attained the expected standard or met the expectations of the citizens, in an egalitarian and developing society such as ours. Therefore, the questions that may arise are; Do members of the Nigeria Police Force render quality service in our country or, do they operate at an acceptable optimum level and standard no matter the challenges they face? Are there issues that affect and frustrate their efficiency and effectiveness in the Nigerian environment? These questions shall be dealt with in this paper.

Meaning of Police

The word Police comes from middle French "policier" (public order, administration, government), also from Latin "politia" administration) ("Police", (government, Merriam-Webster.com). It is also derived from the Greek "polis", meaning city, reflecting the fact that protopolice were essentially creatures of the city, to the limited extent that they existed as a body. (Kelling, Brodeur, Whetson, Walsh & Banton, 2020). The Police, a body of officers representing the civil authority of government, are typically responsible for maintaining public order and safety, enforcing the law, and preventing, detecting, and investigating criminal activities (Kelling, Brodeur, Whetson, Walsh and Banton, 2020). The Police are said to be:

- a. Community leaders in public safety
- b. Possess broad discretion
- c. Solve sociological and Technological Problem
- d. Occasionally serve in a hostile or dangerous environment (Haley, 1992).

II. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NIGERIA POLICE FORCE

Before the coming of the British to Nigeria, there were traditional African policing methods in place. Thus, the policing arrangement was totally indigenous to the people, and the traditional rulers used able bodied strong men for the administration of justice; for guarding, and in some instances assisting in arresting wrong doers. They were said to have discharged their traditional law enforcement creditably, by ensuring the existence of a lawful and orderly society (www.cleen.org/policing; Brownson, 2012).

During the colonial era, it seemed the position changed, as the primary purpose of the police then was seen to be the advancement of the economic and political agenda of the colonialists (Idowu, 2013). Thus, as the British conquered any nationality, they established their presence by stationing a police force for that territory, due to their fear of resistance by the local people. The colonialists therefore had to use their police force as an instrument of violence and oppression against the indigenous population, thereby building the Police Force on a wrong foundation. A modern and unified Nigeria Police as a matter of fact, started in 1861 when Lagos was colonized, and a Consular Guard of 30 men was set up. However, what was then known as the Nigeria Police was basically for the purpose of sustaining, promoting, and ensuring the socio politico-economic empire of the British in Nigeria (Osavande, 2017). Subsequent reorganization in 1879 by an Ordinance led to the formation of other constabularies in what later became the northern and southern protectorates. The amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria took place in 1914 and in 1930, the Northern and Southern police were merged to form the Nigeria Police Force, with Lagos as the force headquarters, and commanded by an Inspector General of Police. In 1960, when Nigeria became independent, the Nigeria Police Force was re-organised as a federal force under the Constitution of 1960. According to Osayande (2017), "Unfortunately, at independence, there was a structural transfer of the Nigeria Police from the British to us without functional reform. It was like transferring a slave from one master to another master. The Nigerian leadership "re-colonised" the Nigeria Police."

Even though the 1963 Constitution gave the Nigeria Police the power to operate as a single Federal force, the entrance of the military government in 1966 compounded the problem of the police as a force to reckon with, by suspending the Police Council, the Police Service Commission and even the National Assembly (Osayande, 2017). The Police became under-funded, weakened and damaged while the Military monopolized power in the whole country.

When democracy was restored, the Constitutions of 1979 and 1999 again gave the Nigeria Police the power to operate as a single Federal Force by providing in section 214(1) of the 1999 Constitution that:

There shall be a Police Force for Nigeria, which shall be known as the Nigeria Police Force, and subject to the provisions of this section no other Police Force shall be established for the federation or any part thereof.

Thus, today, the Nigeria Police is the only national force, with exclusive jurisdiction throughout the country. Section 214 (2) (a) also provides that:

The Nigeria Police Force shall be organized and administered in accordance with such provisions as may be prescribed by an act of the National Assembly in the exercise of the powers vested on it by the Constitution.

The National Assembly thus enacted the Police Act (Cap. P 19, LFN 2004) which provides for the making of Regulations

with respect to the organization and administration of the Police Force. The Nigeria Police has a centralized management command and control structure. Thus, the Constitution (section 215) and the Police Act created the office of the Inspector General, vesting him with enormous powers over the command of the entire Nigeria Police Force. He alone determines the policy and operational matters. Onwuchekwe (2015) rightly noted that,

...from the colonial period to date, the role of the Nigeria Police has been quite reflective of the political, economic and social developments in the country. In other words, the character, roles and priorities of the Police in the country are principally determined by the changing nature of the political and economic structures of the country at different times.

The poor and faulty foundation on which the Nigeria Police is built, is enough to drown any organisation, no matter how large it is – from the British colonialists to the Politicians, to the Military, and back to the Politicians. It is no wonder that Nigerians do not actually see Police Force as a people oriented organisation, but a government owned outfit.

Functions of the Nigerian Police

The Police are mainly responsible for maintaining public order and safety, enforcing the law, and preventing, detecting, and investigating criminal activities (Kelling, Brodeur, Whetson, Walsh and Banton, 2020). The Police Force therefore, is a most important law enforcement agency in Nigeria with the motto: "Police is your friend." Unfortunately, many Nigerians do not believe in this because of the unpalatable experiences and stories about their encounters with the Police, while carrying out their duties. In any case, the Police have been empowered by the law to perform specific functions and they are expected to work within the confines of the law and Constitution of the land. By section 214 (2) (b) of the 1999 Constitution, the Nigerian Police Force shall have such powers and duties as may be conferred upon them by law. The law that provides for such powers and duties is the Police Act (Cap 355 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria). According to section 4 of that Act:

The Police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of crime, the apprehension of offenders, the preservation of *l* aw and order, the protection of life and property and the due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged.

In summary, the Nigerian Police is generally involved in detection, investigation, apprehension and prosecution of offenders in law courts, as well as the protection of life and property through pro-active policing (Odeh & Umoh, 2015). They also have many functions which require the exercise of their discretion. In *Fawehinmi v IGP* (2007 NWLR (Pt 767) 600), Uwaifo JSC stated that:

...section 214 (1) of the 1999 Constitution recognized one Police

Force for Nigeria and the said police are given the duty under s.4 of the Police Act...to prevent and detect crime, apprehend offenders, preserve law and order, protect life and property and enforce all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged, and that is an important statutory duty which they owe to the generality of the Nigerians and all other persons lawfully living within Nigeria.

To enable the Police in Nigeria efficiently and effectively carry out their responsibilities, there exists a command structure in the force which is a constitutional set-up. Being part of the executive arm of the Federal Government, it is headed by the Inspector General of Police, followed by the Deputy Inspector General, the Assistant Inspector General, the Commissioner of Police in charge of contingents in a State, down to Constable. Thus, by section 215 (2) of the 1999 Constitution, and section 6 of the Police Act, the Nigeria Police Force shall be commanded by the IGP. Consequently, all orders, directives and instructions to perform or carry out the duties with which the Police is called, flows from the Inspector General of Police, through the chain of Command to any officer positioned to implement such order. Disobedience or failure to carry out any such instruction, directive or order would attract punitive action. The Nigeria Police Force is also divided into seven departments for ease of administration.

III. FACTORS IMPEDING THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POLICE FORCE NIGERIA

There exist various factors that greatly impede the efficiency and effectiveness of the Police Force in Nigeria. Some of these factors include:

Historical Background of the Police Force

The historical affliction of the Police which started with the British colonialists, followed by the Nigerian leadership and capped up by the Military, seems to have chained the Nigeria Police. They did not initially function as protectors of public safety but as hack men of whoever had political advantage. This faulty foundation on which the Nigeria Police Force was built has continued to impact negatively on the way people see them and the way they carry out their functions...not as a Force performing community function, which is the key to effective and efficient policing, but as an organization fit only for use in furtherance of the political empire of whoever is in charge. That chain must be broken to free the Nigeria Police Force from any sort of bondage. It will enable them become better focused, efficient and effective.

Attitude of Nigerians towards the Police

Nigerians have poor and negative perception about the Nigeria police. Notwithstanding efforts made to change this ugly perception, an average Nigerian sees a policeman as an enemy rather than a friend. The reasons include lack of trust, corruption, human rights violations, and perversion of justice, among others. These remove the Nigeria Police Force from the people, making the expected cordial relationship between them almost non-existent. Community members who know criminals would not report them to the police because, Police would give the criminals all the details about the informants; one may equally become a detained suspect because he came to lay a complaint or give information at the police station. On the other hand, a Policeman may be in danger in his effort to arrest a criminal, as the inhabitants of the area may laugh, mock and not help the Policeman, thereby indirectly aligning with the enemy to impede the administration of justice. This attitudinal problem clearly impedes efficient and effective policing in Nigeria.

Political Interference and other Interferences

In Nigeria, the attitude and actions of the political class affect all kinds of organizations and individuals, including the Police. Some politicians use the Police as tugs to intimidate their opponents or perceived enemies. During the past elections, this act was usually brazen and it left ripple effects long after the elections. It is unfortunate that at present, as many as about 100,000 of its personnel, according to Osayande (2017), are deployed to personal protection and guard duties. Almost all the rich men in Nigeria pay for the services of Police to guard and protect them and their families, while denying other Nigerians such Police protection. With this sort of arrangement in place, it becomes difficult to deploy enough Policemen to other public places in particular. This practice should not be encouraged, but in fact stopped, and such Police officers returned to their service posts in order to increase Police presence in the communities and streets. In that way, they will be able to discharge their duties more efficiently and effectively than is presently being witnessed.

Economic Factor

A body as essential as the Police Force should receive better welfare packages, because their job is risk ridden and thus needs sufficient incentive to bring out the best in the police personnel. Welfare packages of the Police are regrettably poor compared to their counterparts in most countries, and should be revisited as a matter of urgency. The Nigeria Police do not have good and habitable barracks (whether they keep the environment tidy and decent is another matter); they carry badly maintained weapons inferior to those used by criminals, wear old and washed uniforms, have poor conditions of service, among others. Though everyone complains bitterly about the Police being corrupt and receiving bribes shamelessly, many have failed to ask how much these policemen earn, how adequate the living conditions and medical facilities available to them and their families are. We rave and rant about the police evading services during distress calls, but we never ask if they have any security for the future in case of extreme and adverse consequences of rendering such services; what is left as packages for their wives and children should they face the danger unsuccessfully, that is, in case of death? We never ask if, in this era of technology there is provision in the budget for effective safety gear like body armour, to enhance their capacity to remain safe during such operations (Karimu, 2015). While this is not in any way intended to enthrone mediocrity or encourage bribery and corruption in the police force, it is essential that the welfare packages of the policemen should be radically revisited and made commensurate with the demands of their duties in order to boost their morale, efficiency and effectiveness. Thus, the poor economic circumstances of the men, women and officers of the Nigeria Police Force constitute an impediment to efficient and effective performance of their functions.

Topography and Language

Nigeria does not have a uniform topography, just as is common globally. Police officers posted, for example, to riverine areas, should be given special training to match with the demand of duty in those areas. Those posted to extremely hot regions should be given facilities that blend with those areas. Special attention should therefore be given to the police officers who perform their duties in such areas.

Due to the multi ethnic nature of Nigeria, different languages abound. Posting a policeman where there is language barrier does not augur well for effective policing. If officers are posted where they speak the same language as the individuals they encounter, communication is enhanced, safety is promoted, and dangerous misunderstandings or unnecessarily violent escalations are prevented. Thus, being mindful of topography and language barrier during postings would help police efficiency and effectiveness in Nigeria.

Increasing Rate of Poverty and Unemployment

Nigeria is made up of over 180 million people and more than 400 tribes. It is dotted with villages, towns, cities, and slums, with very poor infrastructure. Thousands of young men and women have dropped out of school due to poverty and roam the streets without being employed or employable. There are also thousands of these youths churned out by primary, secondary and tertiary institutions that are equally unemployed and move from one city to the other in search of jobs. The implications are many. For example, when these people find their way into the police force, they do not have passion for the job and are quick to be involved in bribery and corruption and all vices associated with the Police Force. Again, with so many of the jobless and hungry youth roaming the streets, crime increases and gets more sophisticated, and our politicians find them handy for use to rig elections and eliminate their political opponents or anybody for that matter. This weighs heavily on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Police. Poverty and youth unemployment must be tackled, if Nigeria desires a more efficient and effective Police Force in Nigeria.

Criticisms and Condemnation

Nigerians are good at criticising and condemning people or organizations. The Nigeria Police Force has been battered with such, and the result is always low self-esteem. They may believe there is no point working hard and risking one's life only to face condemnation and battering by critics. They thus, cannot be proud of their job, and also cannot be efficient or effective.

The Nigerian Factor

The Nigerian factor has been described as the corrupt tendencies which originate from corrupt value system and mind-set, and has become an acceptable way of life among many Nigerians (Omale, 2017). It is also explained as the ingrained attitude of Nigerians, the police inclusive, of always looking out for what is in there for them rather than what they can contribute in any given circumstance (Omale, 2017). An average Nigerian does not accept a responsibility in order to improve on it, but to get his or her share of the cake. Accordingly, most of those bad people recruited in the Police Force always see the job as a quick means of making more money. The various ways and phrases in which the 'Nigerian factor' can manifest in the attitude of Nigerians include, "Nigerian time", gratitude, "use your brain", "shine your eye o", "No carry government for head o", "E no matter", "Forget e", and others (Onakpoberuo, 2015). This is the reason some individuals would be quick to offer bribe or 'settle' the police when there is an issue, even when they are on the right side of the law; again, the reason some others move around without vehicle particulars, or fearlessly commit crime here and there with impunity and full confidence that, they can do so, and if confronted by the Police, they would quickly and easily use money to appease them. Thus, the negative acts and behaviour of Nigerians, regarded as the Nigerian factor, have robbed the Police of efficiency and effectiveness.

Constitutional and Political Clash

Nigeria is a Federation made up of 36 federating States and a central government. The roles of each, both the regional and central government have been delineated in the legislative lists of the 1999 Constitution, in a manner that guarantees independence especially for administrative conveniences. Section 214 of the Constitution establishes the Nigeria Police for the Federation, and section 215(1)(a) creates the office of the Inspector General of Police (IGP), while section 215(1)(b) provides that there shall be a Commissioner of Police (CP) for each state of the Federation. In providing for the functions of the Inspector General of Police and Commissioner of Police of each state, section 215(2) provides that, the Nigeria Police Force shall be under the command of the Inspector-General of Police, and contingents of the Nigeria Police Force stationed in a state shall, subject to the authority of the Inspector-General of Police, be under the command of the Commissioner of Police of that state.

Section 215(4) provides that the Governor of a state may give to the Commissioner of Police of that state such lawful directions with respect to the maintenance and securing of public safety and public order within the state, as he may consider necessary, and the Commissioner of Police shall comply with those directions or cause them to be complied with. This particular provision is consistent with the feature of true federalism, and reflects significantly, the need to keep the federating units independent, with respect to administration and security of the state. However, there is a proviso to section 215(4), to the effect that, in some cases, whether or not requiring urgency or immediate attention, the Commissioner of Police will not carry out the instructions of the Governor of a state without first having the President authorise the orders. According to that proviso, '...before carrying out any such directions under the foregoing provisions of this subsection, the Commissioner of Police may request that the matter be referred to the President or such Minister of the Government of the Federation as may be authorised in that behalf by the President for his directions.' The utility of this proviso is doubtful, especially as it has led to political hiccups in the past.

Though section 215(4) has been defended as providing some strictures on the powers of the Governor to manipulate the police administration in his state, it has in some significant way provided a soft pedal for the President or designated Minister to ride on and limit the effectiveness of police administration in that state. This proviso is capable of pitching the President and Governor of a state into a political crisis which would definitely in that regard, adversely affect the efficiency and effectiveness of the police in Nigeria.

Statutory Limitations

Some provisions of Nigerian laws are quite limiting. One of such is the provision of section 14 of the Constitution providing for federal character in appointments or employments. The implication, as has been variously argued, is that, in matters of security of the citizens, qualification of the policemen takes a back seat for there to be compliance to that provision, thereby bringing in all sorts of characters into the Police Force. This is why there are some 'illiterate' Policemen who collect particulars from drivers for a check, and turn them upside down in order to read; and there also are those, who still do not know that women can take a person on bail.

Fortunately, the provision of Regulation 124 (made pursuant to the Police Act), requiring a woman to request for permission before getting married, was struck down by our pragmatic judiciary in a decided case, which rendered that provision illegal, null and void (Police women no longer need Commissioner's permission to marry – Court, 2012).

Cultural Factors

Nigeria is one of the countries in the world that is mainly patrilineal in structure, thereby encouraging male dominance and control over females in all spheres of life. The cultural setting and social institutions/attitudes see women as inferior, so that women in some parts of Nigeria were, and are still regarded as chattels or property owned by their husbands. The Nigerian Penal Code even gives a man the right to chastise, that is, beat his wife. Meanwhile, Nigeria is not just a signatory to international conventions on equality for women, but has also promulgated the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP Act) of 2015, which prohibits all forms of violence against women. Unfortunately, many Police officers in Nigeria have little or no regard for women. That was why a battered woman ran to the Police station to report a serious case of domestic violence. The Policeman on duty said to her: 'Is that why you ran to this place? What of my wife I beat every day, has she reported to anyone?' Such cases, including rape cases too, are treated with levity and mockery of the woman. The Police Force in Nigeria is dominated by men who cannot fairly handle some of these gender based complaints. All these negatively affect the Police efficiency and effectiveness.

Again, the Police Force recruits much more men than women, with limiting and discriminatory conditions attached to women's terms of employment (Sections 121-125, 127-128 of the Police Act). These have constrained their roles, operations and activities as Police officers. The poor representation and inferior status of women in the Police Force is a result of decades of inequality and discrimination suffered by women in society. All these negatively affect Police efficiency and effectiveness in Nigeria.

IV. STRATEGIES FOR EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE MAINTENANCE OF LAW AND ORDER BY THE NIGERIA POLICE

- i. The Police in Nigeria must be shielded from politicians who have a hand in corrupting them. The Nigeria Police Force needs freedom from external control in the performance of their duties, to enable improvement of police integrity (Adegoke, 2014).
- ii. The Nigeria Police Force needs to be professionalised to be able to discharge their functions with a great sense of responsibility. This will improve their human relations and bring a better relationship between police and members of the public who have diminished trust or respect for them at the moment. Only qualified and suitable personnel should be recruited even when the issue of federal character is put into consideration.
- iii. The Police salary should be increased to a decent level. This may discourage bribery and corruption in the Police Force.
- iv. The Police need enhanced budgetary allocation to maintain objectivity and avoid compromises with respect to the performance of their duties. For instance, as against a capital budget of estimate N342.9 billion proposed for 2018 fiscal year, the Force was given an appropriation of N25.5billion. (Punch, April 16, 2019). The meagre resources allocated to it, are very inadequate to meet with the demands of policing a large country like Nigeria, with a huge population.

- v. Nigerians need to support and encourage the police to enhance their professionalism and improve police /public relations.
- vi. Good welfare packages would enhance police performance. Thus, the prevailing welfare conditions of the Nigeria Police Force should be reviewed and improved upon.
- vii. There should be development and enforcement of a gender policy to cover recruitment, training, promotion and other aspects of policing, for the benefit of the police women in Nigeria. Also, women Police should handle female issues in police stations.
- viii. Effective communication is very important, hence police officers in Nigeria need to be posted where there is no language barrier, and also, they should be educated and trained on a difficult terrain or topography before being posted to such a place.

V. CONCLUSION

The need for efficiency and effectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force in the maintenance of law and order cannot be overemphasised because, it is an indispensable institution in this respect. Nigeria is riddled with all sorts of crimes and violence: acts of lawlessness, social disorder, rape, armed robbery, kidnapping, violence, assassinations, among others. Only an efficient and effective Police Force can keep such a society stable in the circumstances. Unfortunately, the Police in Nigeria have been largely criticised because of poor attitude to work and unethical conduct, among others. Thus, Osayande (2017) stated that in Nigeria, "the Police have been maligned, battered and dismembered. The Police have been polluted to such an extent that the Force requires a complete surgical operation and dialysis".

The motto of the Nigeria Police Force is: 'Police is your friend,' but many Nigerians do not believe in that saying. It is absolutely unacceptable and unthinkable that a police officer would kill because of a N50 bribe, burn people alive after robbing them or connive with armed robbers to unleash terror on innocent citizens. Consequently, rather than evoke confidence and hope in the public, the appearance of policemen often arouses a depressing picture of fear and mistrust, so much, that many people would rather not have anything to do with any policeman in Nigeria. Truly, the Nigeria Police Force has performed below expectation, but the various factors discussed in this paper actually impede their efficiency and effectiveness, thereby making them to be perceived as an ineffective institution. However, it is notable that their efficiency and effectiveness are also dependent on the nature and character of the Nigerian society in which they operate, as the Police Force can rightly be said to be a reflection of the society.

Nevertheless, as unsatisfactory as it may be, the Nigeria Police Force could be restructured to indelibly ingrain in the members, those positive values, beliefs, philosophies and principles that drive a standard, efficient and effective Police Force. Its performance could equally be enhanced, if the Government puts in place, the essential items for modern policing. These will ensure optimal performance; for example, better salary and welfare, decent accommodation, among others. It is heart-warming to learn, if we are to rely on our journalists, that the list of new Nigeria Police Force salary structure approved by the Federal Government has emerged with a remarkable change for the better (Aired on Galaxy TV). The Minister of Police Affairs has equally said that the recruitment of 10, 000 policemen will soon commence (Police: Recruitment of Fresh Constables Begins Soon, todayng, 2020). He also noted that promotions were going on for those officers qualified, without delaying them. Due to the poor state of the barracks, absence of modern equipment and proper welfare package for the Police personnel, the President has also assented to the Police Trust Fund (PTF) Bill passed by the National Assembly, while the Minister of Police Affairs has inaugurated the Board of the Police Trust Fund. The Board's duties include the identification of the funding needs of the various police institutions for the enhancement of the performance of the Nigeria Police Force (Nigeria: Finally, Minister Inaugurates Police Trust Fund Board, This Day (Lagos), 2020). It is hoped that all these will make the dream of the President, and indeed all well-meaning Nigerians and law abiding citizens, to have a professional, responsible and responsive Police Force, to come true. Every citizen of this country wishes for a Nigeria Police Force that would one day rank highest in Africa, and take a prominent position in the world map!

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