

The Politicization of the Liberia National Police is Deepening Despite its Reforms (The LNP Act, 2015)

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ABSTRACT

Guided by the theory of change as the theoretical framework in which the study is anchored, this article has argued that the Liberia National Police is becoming increasingly politicized, which is ironic given the goals of its reform inaugurated in 2004 under the auspices of UNMIL.

With the reliance on a qualitative approach particularly focusing on secondary data as the content analysis and anecdotal evidence, the study has intellectualized how section 22.76(b) of the LNP Act, 2015 subjected the LNP to politicization. The study sees this section as a sharp or complete contradiction to Section 3 (l) that strictly forbids the LNP from a partisan approach to enforcing the rule of law in Liberia and Section 4 that defines police officer in LNP context. The study also argued that people who have visibly aligned themselves with a political party with the expectation of being appointed are already compromised even before their appointment. As such, it sets the stage for the public to brand the LNP as partisan police. The paper concludes that instead of the reform reducing the politicization of the LNP, it is deepening the phenomenon.

Finally, the paper concludes that based on the theoretical framework in which the crux of argument is anchored, there is a serious need to revisit section 22.76 (b) which is counter-productive to the development and professionalism of the LNP.

Key Words: Liberia National Police, LNP Act, 2015, Latent Impact, Politicization, Police Reform, Political Environment, Theory of Change,

INTRODUCTION

From the Security Sector perspective, experts will interpose no objection to the claim that one of the main essences of police reform is to remove or reduce the politicization of the national police. This is because of the proclivity of politicization to frustrate all the significant investments and efforts put into the reform by the international community. More importantly, it undermines professionalism as one of the desired outcomes of police reform in any society. Therefore, mindful of the impact of the political environment in which the police operate, the framers of the Liberia National Police (LNP) Act of 2015 conscientiously aloof or distanced the LNP from becoming politicized. Specifically, Section 3 (L) strictly forbids the LNP from a partisan approach to enforcing the rule of law or policing Liberia.

Despite the legislation or enactment of the LNP Act of 2015 inaugurated to make the LNP professional by

substantially reducing the politicization of the LNP, it has created a viable ground to deepen the politicization of the LNP.

Against this backdrop, this article explains the irony of the reform with specific reference to the LNP Act of 2015. In other words, it explains how a particular provision in the LNP Act of 2015 is deepening the politicization of the police. Precisely, it examines section 22.76 (b) under the sub-caption “Appointment of Inspector General and Deputies of Police”.

Structurally, it explores the paper in three segments. The first segment briefly introduces the theoretical framework necessary to guide the argument or discussion in the paper. Concisely, it features the theory of change relevant to police reform. The second segment discusses police in context and conceptualizes the political environment in which the police operate. The third segment highlights the LNP Act of 2015. Particularly, it briefly examines section 3 (L) and section 22.76 (b). Under this section, the paper also explains the inherent contradiction between the two sections and also brings out the latent impact on the LNP. Finally, the fourth section draws logical conclusions.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

This paper adopts a quantitative approach with a particular focus on secondary data as the content analysis and anecdotal evidence. The secondary data were obtained from the Google search engine through documents and literature review. Anecdotal evidence is qualitative data that doesn't measure anything, but it does describe one person's experience and observation, collected in a casual or non-systematic manner. (Penn, 2021). Mindful of not embarrassing and harming the identity of the certain research subjects mentioned as examples to buttress arguments, the paper also adopts the principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy associated with research. For this reason, citations are ignored deliberately to avoid clues that will insinuate the research subjects.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This paper contributes to knowledge in three ways. First, it exposes the flaw in the LNP 2015 Act undermining professionalism and development. Secondly, it makes the case to review and repeal the flawed provision. Finally, the paper may serve as guidance for further research to be carried out on the subject matter in areas that the paper did not cover or touch.

Theoretical Framework- The Theory of Change

This article employed the theory of change that supports institutional change.

Originated from the early work of Paolo Freire (1960s) that development planners and practitioners use, the theory of change explains why it is thinkable that certain actions such as a project, program, initiative, intervention, or an organizational strategy likely will lead to the desired change in society (An inspirational guide for Development CSOs, 2015). In a similar tone, Woodrow & Oatley (2013) argue that the theory of change explains why it is thinkable that certain actions will produce a desired change in each context. Another earliest popularizer of the theory of change is Carol Weiss. In the description of Weiss (1995), a theory change is conceptualized as “how and why an initiative works.”

Supplementarily, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) Companion Guidance details substantial information on the theory of change that is also worth mentioning in this article. The manual maintains that a theory of change helps to identify solutions to effectively address the causes of problems that hinder progress and guide decisions on which approach should be taken, considering the inherent and obvious comparative advantages, effectiveness, feasibility, and uncertainties that are part of

any change process (UNDAF Companion Guidance, n.d).

From a reform perspective, a theory of change is necessary to help organizations systematically think through the many underlying and root causes of development challenges, and how they influence each other when determining what an organization should address as a priority to maximize the organization's contribution to achieving development change. The change may include but is not limited to policy(ies) formulation, regulations, directives, capacity building, and on.

The above conceptualizations of the theory of change suggest that theory is driven by meticulous research taking into consideration all the ramifications and implications a given intervention, initiative, program, or policy will likely have on the organizations or institutions.

Judging from the above premise reflecting on organizational reform, it is safe to connect the theory of change to police reform. This is because the police typify or exemplify a formal organization saddled with the responsibility of providing law enforcement services to society. More importantly, any police reform must take cognizance of the aspirations of the public relative to the services provided.

As a research exercise, the theory of change also suggests organizational assessment and evaluation of the impact of existing policy(ies), initiative(s), and intervention(s) on the institution. As such, a paradigm shift becomes an imperative move when the desired outcome (s) or result(s) is not coming forth as anticipated.

Like other theories that have weaknesses, the theory of change couldn't be an exception. In the opinion of this paper, one of the weaknesses lies in the latent function a change will have on the organization and by extension society in general. Coined and postulated by Merton (1957), latent functions are the unintended, often hidden consequences of social actions. In the context of reform, it can be equated to social action simply because of its impact on society. In the opinion of Merton (1957), not all latent functions benefit society. When it negatively affects society, it becomes dysfunctional. When such is the case, it obligates stakeholders or policymakers to adopt a paradigm shift informed by meticulous research with a focus on the revision of specific policies, interventions, programs, etc.

In submission, the theory of change serves as a useful tool or framework to interrogate or evaluate the impact of reform on any police organization including the Liberia National Police.

Police Reform in Context

Considered one of the thematic areas in Security Sector Reform, especially in post-conflict situations, police reform aims to transform the values, culture, policies, and practices of police organizations so that police can perform their duties with respect for democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law (DCAF SSR BACKGROUNDER, n.d.) Guided by a normative framework, police reform in a post-conflict environment becomes necessary where the police have often perpetrated serious human rights violations, often cut off from the populations they are meant to serve and protect, and operate more like military contingents than public security officers (O'Neill, 2005).

Similarly, Groenewald & Peake (2004) conceptualized police reform as the transformation or change of a police organization into a professional and

accountable police service practicing a style of policing that is responsive to the needs of local communities. Inarguably, the above conceptualizations of police reform imply that it is extremely political and requires the endorsement and support of relevant national state actors (The Executive, Legislature, public, etc.) and at times non-state actors (The International Community, donors) (O'Neill, 2005). Police reform is extremely political simply because it operates in a saturated political environment that influences decisions within the

organization. This suggests that police reform must take cognizance of the political environment in which the reform will take place. O'Neill (2005) emphatically and bluntly opined that because police reform is likely to affect or change power distribution and relationships, resistance is natural. Many or some police officers in the old order will see the reform as a direct threat, a zero-sum game where they stand to lose, and others will gain. Those who invested in the old structure will not be happy with this conclusion and can be expected to resist change.

Depending on the context or situation, police reform is not only confined to weeding out the bad apples critical to restoring public trust and confidence, and professionalism, but also capacity building, structural changes, policies formulation and regulations as well.

Premise on the fact that police reform is about institutional change or overhaul, it fits into the theory of change. It explains stakeholders' or actors' assumptions of how and why changes or reform will rebr and the image of the police organization.

With close reference to the context of police reform discussed above, it makes sense to say that it typifies the context of police reform in Liberia from many dimensions. First, Liberia is a post-conflict society in which the image of the LNP was tainted because of the role played by the LNP during the civil war. The LNP was conspicuously militarized by the warring factions, politicized, inflicted gross human rights abuses on the members of the public, involved in corrupt practices, etc. Consequently, these activities compromised the professionalism of the LNP and at the same time eroded the public trust and confidence in the LNP. Therefore, to rebrand the tainted image of the LNP, the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in Accra, Ghana sanctioned by the UN Security Council Resolution 1509 was the normative or legal framework that inaugurated the reform under the auspices of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). During that time, the Transitional Government headed by Charles Judy Byrant, and the relevant civil society were the state actors, and UNMIL in cooperation with ECOWAS were the non-state actors. The involvement of state actors providing legitimate support to the non-state actors explains the political context in which the reform took place. The reform was focused on weeding out the bad apples, capacity building, and structural changes such as the introduction of the Community Service Section, Women and Children Unit, Professional Standard Division, policies formulation, and the enactment of relevant instruments (Acts and Regulations, Administrative Instructions). From 2005-2008, the UNMIL provided basic training for 3,661 officers, including 344 women. More than 1,000 officers had received specialized training (United Nations Security Council, 2008).

The Goal of the LNP Reform

The overarching goal of the LNP reform under the auspices of UNMIL, precisely UNPOL, was to rebrand the tainted image of the LNP caused by the negative impacts of the 14 years of civil war. This suggests that civil war reduced the LNP to an instrument of political oppression executing orders of successive autocratic, governments and military dictatorships. Sawyer (1992) described the use of police force for political repression in Liberia. Moreover, Sawyer (2005) opined or argued that the LNP intimidated and suppressed ordinary citizens and political opposition leaders to protect the regime during the war. The LNP became politically biased, militarized, and ethnically divided. Many officers of the LNP arbitrarily committed human rights abuses and participated in atrocities committed against unarmed citizens.

Political Environment in Context

Premised on the fact that police operate within the political environment of every society, it presupposes the claim that police reform takes place within the political environment that is likely to impact or largely influence the reform. Perhaps, bearing this in mind, Baker (2010) while assessing the impact of the reform on the Sierra Leone police asked the question. "Did the reform understand the political context"? This

question explains the importance of the political environment or context in which police reform takes place. This is because the political environment has the propensity to either accelerate the gains or undermine the efforts of the reform.

Premised on the above, the political environment reflects the Executive Branch of the government saddled with the constitutional responsibility of enforcing the law enacted by the legislature and the public. The police in most countries operate under the Executive Branch mandated to enforce the laws. In other words, the Police is the visible organ of the Executive Branch carrying out the function of enforcing the laws. Because the Executive Branch is political, it suggests the fact that the police function under the direct supervision of politicians, precisely the President having a vested interest that may have implications for the reform. The political environment in which the police largely operate makes the organization to be political. The historicity of law enforcement, precisely modern policing traceable to the credit of Sir Robert Peel well known as the “Father of Modern Policing” a British politician (Lentz, et al., 2007) is enough to explain the political nature of policing in society. However, the political environment in which the police operate cannot be a justification for politicizing the organization. Therefore, the regulatory normative framework in clear terms distances police organizations from politics. As such, the leadership must be mindful of political entanglement that has the potential to subject the organization to public ridicule.

In the case of Liberia, Article 54 of the 1986 Constitution confers the power upon the President who by his position is a politician to appoint the senior leadership of the LNP. The leadership serves at the will and pleasure of the President. This also implies that the leadership of the LNP is answerable or accountable to the President directly or through the Ministry of Justice. It doesn't indicate that the LNP is not accountable to the people. Of course, it is accountable to the people. However, the LNP is politically vulnerable to interference and influence from the Executive. Interestingly, the political environment in which the LNP is operating places the independence and job security of the leadership in the hands of the Executive Branch. As such, it is easy for the leadership of the LNP to succumb to the dictates of the Executive Branch. In other words, “He who pays the piper dictates the tune.” On the flip side of the coin, the leadership must be mindful of political entanglements.

The LNP Act, 2015 – Outcome of the Reform

As mentioned not too long ago, the reform was not only inaugurated to weed out the “Bad Apples” (officers who had played an active part in the civil wars) believed to have tarnished the image of the LNP but to also reform the existing legal framework and introduce regulatory framework or policies. The current Police Act, 2015 speaks to one of the pieces of evidence of the reform as a milestone achievement to regulate the LNP discharge of its legal mandate. In fact, the Act, 2015 is one of the main and essential legal frameworks that add value to the legitimacy of the LNP.

The LNP Act, 2015 which was approved on 12 July 2016 by Former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf repealed the previous LNP legal framework. Particularly, it Amended the Executive Law with respect to Liberia to the Liberia National Police Force as well as any other acts amendatory thereto; and the Decree of the People's Redemption Council establishing the National Police Academy, Repealing Subchapter E, The Police Academy, Title 12, Chapter 22, Ministry of Justice; and to Amend Chapter 22, Ministry of Justice, Subchapter D, Liberia National Police, and to establish in lieu thereto, The Liberia National Police Act, 2015. In other words, the LNP Act, 2015 re-established the LNP. On the premise of reform, it suggests that the previous legal framework repealed had serious fundamental flaws or problems such as

The LNP Act, 2015 is enriched with some specific provisions meant to enhance the professionalization and improve the relationship with the public of the LNP For example, section 22.72 mindful of the contemporary law enforcement challenges relating to policing broadens the scope of the LNP functions; section 22.73 provides the source of police power anchored on the 1986 Constitution of the Republic of

Liberia. Moreover, section 22.74 delineates the structure of the LNP into four commands with clear descriptions, section 22.87 outlines the duties of the LNP officers. The Act also provides discipline and disciplinary procedures for the LNP (see section 22.90).

Interesting Sections/Provisions in the LNP Act, 2015

Section 3 (I)

Interestingly, the LNP Act, 2015 mindful of the devastating impact of politics aloof the LNP from politics despite operating in a polarized political environment. Specifically, section 3 captioned “Declaration of Principles” (i) frowns upon partisan approach to policing. In verbatim, *“The Establishment of the Liberia National Police, which shall strictly non-partisan and shall exercise its power and function exclusively at the service of the state”*. In a simple explanation, even though the leadership of the LNP is appointed and operates under the Executive Branch of Government that represents the ruling political party, however, it shall discharge its duties void of party sentiment, influence, or connection.

Section 4 Definitions (Police Officer)

Conscious of the open interpretation of police officers that could be used to justify another argument for employment or inclusion, section 4 contextualized the definition. In verbatim, “Police officer” means *“an employee of the Liberia National Police who has met the recruitment criteria as in this Act (LNP Act, 2015) and has been certified by the Liberia National Police Training Academy and Training School as having undergone basic police training as a Police Officer or as having met any other entry level requirement as may be approved in Liberia National Police Recruitment Guidelines”*. In a simple explanation, this definition is crystal clear. It restricts the definition of police officer to training in basic police education from the Liberia National Police Training Academy and Training School. By the parity of reasoning, the definition is inclusive of all police officers serving in the LNP. It does not in any way exclude the Inspector General of Police (IGP) including the four Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIGP). All of them must undergo basic police training at Liberia National Police Training Academy and Training School.

For clarity’s sake, the LNP Recruitment Guidelines define any other entry level as part of the requirement. Particularly, section 7 (ix) page 95 under Rights and Condition of Service Regulation of 2016 says, *“Has successfully undertaken a basic police course at the Liberia National Police Training Academy and Training School required as per the recruitment guidelines from an equivalent institution”*. From an educational perspective, an equivalent institution describes how a credit, certificate, or degree offered by one school, college or university relates to a credit, certificate, or degree offered by another. By this best practice, it is safe to argue that the equivalent institution could be another Police Training Academy, college, or university offering basic police courses as entry level for their police organization or department accepted by the Liberia National Police Academy and Training School. For example, in the Academy of South Bay Regional Public Safety Training, the basic police hands-on training curriculum includes fundamental principles, procedures, and techniques of law enforcement, including Criminal Law, Patrol Procedures, Cultural Diversity, Investigative Procedures, Report Writing, Defensive Tactics, Firearms, Leadership, Ethics, Community Policing, Police Vehicle Operations, Traffic Enforcement, Accident Investigation, Handling Emotional Situations and First Aid/CPR (The Academy, 2023).

Similarly, Police Training Academies in Nigeria’s curricula for basic police hands-on training focus on three core areas or modules: law enforcement, crime prevention, and community policing (Idoko, 2023).

Certified applicant(s) in basic police hands-on training could be acceptable by the LNP for employment as a police officer provided naturalized as a citizen. Or it fits into the definition of “Police Officer” contained in

section 4, page 7 of the LNP Act, 2015.

In the opinion of this paper, this definition should guide the President in exercising his/her constitutional duty to appoint the IGP and DIGPs. Arguably, appointing the IGP and DIGPs without regard to the definition would violate best practice of appointing a police chief within the organization, not from outside. This could be the intent of the framer to have confined the definition in the context of basic police training from the Liberia National Police Training Academy and Training School.

Section 22.76 Appointment of IGP and DIGPs

This section precisely (b) gives the President the power to appoint the IGP without regard to section 4, page 7 of the LNP Act, 2015 which defines and contextualizes police officer. It says the appointee must have integrity and possess indisputable competence in matters relating to security sector and a graduate from a recognized university with at least a bachelor's degree. By this provision open to the interpretation of security sector as a broad concept, it could mean that the President can appoint anybody outside the LNP with security knowledge not necessarily police related. Moreover, the appointee doesn't necessarily have to be a product of the basic police training from the Liberia National Police Training Academy and Training School or from another equivalent institution as mentioned in the LNP Act, 2015.

Appointment of DIGPs

Section 22.79 (d) restricts the President's appointment of section 4 which subjects the DIGPs to hands-on training. In verbatim, it says "A Deputy General of Police shall be a police officer within the meaning of Act". This provision simply means all the DIGPs namely: Administration, Operations, Crime Service, and Training and Men Power Development cannot be appointed from outside the LNP. They must graduate from the Liberia National Police Training Academy and Training School. Arguably, it implies certification in police basic recruit training defined as the entry level. The current Act 2015 did not provide Senior Management Course or Training as an alternative entry level. As such, it would be difficult to advance any argument in favor of the alternative entry level.

The Contradiction Between Section 4 and Section 22.76 (b)

The juxtaposition of Section 4 and 22.76(b) reveals a sharp contradiction between the two sections. While section 4 narrowed the definition of a police officer that should include the IGP, section 22.76(b) distanced the IGP from the definition of Police Officer captured under section 4 and narrowed it to any person of integrity with competence in matters relating to the security sector. In the minds of the framers of the LNP Police Act, 2015, it can be discerned that hands-on knowledge or training in basic police course for the entry level is not enough to qualify police officers for the position of IGP. Competence in matters relating to the security sector is the main requirement for IGP. To express it in other words, besides the basic police hands-on training that is mandatory according to the LNP Act, 2015, the IGP must have competence in matters relating to the security sector. On the flip side of the same coin, matters relating to the security sector is ambiguous or vague. This is because the security sector is an umbrella concept that transcends the police as one of the components of the sector. So, what if the IGP's competence in the security sector is related to fighting drug trafficking, financial crime, or immigration? Can he/she possibly preside over the LNP in the absence of the security sector relative to basic police training or police science?

Arguably, it is also another contradiction for an IGP and DIGP to preside over the LNP or ascend to leadership positions in the LNP without hands-on training or knowledge in basic police course or police science. This will create a serious capacity gap that could hinder the making of technical decisions. Ponder over this scenario. Where is an IGP faced with an endorsement of a report that is essentially embedded with

officers mishandling of the rules of engagement for rioting, civil disturbance, or crowd control. Can the IGP or DIP knowledge in the security sector unrelated to hands-on training in basic police or police science help him/her make independent decisions? Or rely on his/her deputies? What if the deputies lack competence in basic police hands-on training or police science? To avoid this embarrassment that could be translated to or termed as gross incompetence, best practices demand that the IGP and DIPs must be equipped with the basic rudiments of police hands-on training coupled with advanced credentials in the security sector relative to police operation and administration. To buttress this assertion, ponder on the situation or standoff between the Deputy Inspector General of Police for Operation and a seating Lawmaker of the House of Representation. The DIGP for Operations ordered his subordinate officers to arrest and impound the vehicle of the Lawmaker for reckless driving and disorderly conduct. The officers refused to obey what could have been termed a lawful order from the DIP for Operations. The officers declined or refused to implement the order because of their understanding of Article 42 of the 1986 Constitution of Liberia learned during their basic police recruit training at the Liberia National Police Training Academy and Training School. Without sounding demeaning, had the DIGP for Operations passed through the walls of the Liberia National Police Training Academy and Training School, perhaps he would have taken a different course of action to avoid embarrassment.

Another situation to ponder was the Liberian Senate committee's prudent initial rejection of the confirmation of the IGP nomination on the grounds of no formal police training disclosed by the nominee. Even though the nominee was eventually confirmed based on political maneuvering, the initial decision of the Senate committee was in consonance with the best practice associated with the appointment and confirmation of IGP with formal police training. According to

Wright (n.d.), a best practice is a standard or set of guidelines that is known to produce good outcomes if followed. Even though best practices are often viewed as subjective because of the context variation. However, it has been proven to produce results that are superior to those achieved by other means. As such, it has become a standard way of doing things, or a standard way of complying with legal or ethical requirements (Bardach, 2011).

According to the National Aviation Academy (n.d.), hands-on training (referred to as experiential learning or kinesthetic learning) allows students to put theory into practice and apply their knowledge into real-world settings and perform tasks that would be relevant to future jobs. In all police training academies, hands-on training is prioritized to allow the cadets or recruits to get hands-on with accessories, and weapons, and receive direction from well trained and experienced instructors.

How Section 22.76 (b) is Deepening the Politicization of the LNP

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, one of the weaknesses of the theory of change can be viewed from Robert Merton's concept of latent purpose or function associated with change or reform that advances the argument about the unintentional and often unrecognized impact a phenomenon or change will have on a given institution or organization (Merton, 1957). This latent impact, often unknown to the framers or agents of change or reform, could have a positive or negative impact on the organization. Whenever the impact is negative on the organization, it is termed dysfunctional. So, in the context of section 22.76(b) of the LNP Act, 2015 which gives the President of the Republic of Liberia to appoint the IGP and DIPs outside the LNP or without the certification of section 4 of the LNP Act, 2015 has a negative latent impact on the LNP. Section 22.76(b) has laterally deepened the LNP to politicization. Observation has proven beyond a reasonable doubt about individuals who are yet to make public their credentials in hands-on training for basic police recruit course from the Liberia National Police Training and Training School or from its equivalent as contained in the LNP Recruitment Guidelines openly lobby with politicians to occupy the position of IGP and DIGP. In other words, individuals eyeing the IGP and DIGP positions are taking advantage of section 22.76(b) by publicly aligning themselves with political parties for subsequent

appointments. As anecdotal evidence, two former state security actors who were volunteer members of the private security team of one Liberia major and formidable opposition parties were criticized for performing a quasi-police investigation of a vehicle operator that rammed into the supporters of the Unity Party killing three persons, and injuring others severally.

Despite the pending inauguration of the President-elect scheduled for 22nd Jan 2024, the names of these non-state security actors were rumored of the appointment of the IGP position between the two of them. Now, the question worth asking is, why will these former state security actors align themselves with the Unity Party? Why were they involved in a quasi-police investigation by interviewing a criminal suspect? Without being prejudiced to the facts, it can be argued that these non-state security actors got involved to showcase their expertise that would sell them for the job they are eyeing or competing for.

Interestingly, one of them emphatically expressed his intent by indicating that he would settle for nothing less than the position of IGP if allowed to serve the Unity Party-led government again from his assertion, it can be inferred that he is dictating to the President-elect to appoint him as the IGP.

In passing, the theory of reciprocity which also applies to professional environment explains that in many social situations, people pay back what they receive from others. In other words, if Flomo does you a favor, you're likely to return it to him (Budi, 2014). In the case of politics, if people are given positions based on their connections, it may have implications for the job. As a payback germane to satisfying or pleasing the job giver, their actions may contravene the ethical code of conduct, professional norms, or standards associated with the organizational culture. So, likening this to the caption of this paper, individuals lobbying with politicians or political parties to get an appointment must be prepared to give back or pay back in exchange for the appointment that may have implications for the job.

In summation, section 22.76(b) of the LNP Act, 2015 that untied the hands of the President not by compulsion to appoint the leadership of the LNP based upon section 4 of the LNP Act, 2015 has subjected and deepened the LNP to politicization. It is because of section 22.76(b) individuals eyeing the IGP and DIGP positions are aligning themselves with political parties without regard to the obvious implications it will have on the LNP.

Other Latent Impacts of Section 22.76(b) on the LNP

Perhaps the framers who inserted this provision into the LNP Act, 2015 never had the time to ponder the ramifications it would have had on the LNP. Therefore, from a meticulous dissection of section 22.76(b) besides the deepening politicization of the LNP, two important dysfunctional aspects it will have on the LNP.

1. It blocks the prospect for progression in the LNP

Inarguably, it is easy to predict the next Chief of Army Staff including Deputies in the Armed Forces of Liberia. This is because the reform has tied the hands of the President of the Republic of Liberia to appoint within the Armed Forces of Liberia. Resultingly, the reform has significantly eliminated or removed the ways and means for Soldiers to align themselves with political parties. In the case of the LNP, it is not possible to easily predict the next IGP and DIGPs within the next six years. This is because the reform, particularly section 22.76(b) did not take cognizance of creating a culture of the prospect for progression relative ascendancy. In other words, to be appointed as the IGP and DIGPs, one must be politically aligned through connections. Moreover, the hands of the President are not tied to section 4 of the LNP Act, 2015. The President may act on section 22.76(b) to bring preferred nominees from outside the LNP.

On the flip side of the same coin, if the President decided to look within the LNP, it might undermine the

prospect for progression as it relates to the culture of ascendancy. In the LNP, it is possible for an Assistant Commissioner of Police or Deputy Commissioner to progress to either the IGP position or the DIGP position. For example, the Deputy Commissioner of Police for Operation (U-109) was appointed as IGP by President Weah in 2018.

2. The Tendency for Low Morale

Dobby, Anschome, & Tuffin (2004 as cited in Philips, 2017) low morale promotes a negative environment of complacency by doing the bare minimum, slowing intrinsic motivation, and creating feelings of ambivalence toward law enforcement goals. It is often manifested by staff conflicts, uncooperative attitudes, lack of enthusiasm, fault finding, low affect, lack of commitment, gripe sessions, high turnover, opposition to authority, “us vs. them” talk, complaints of team members not carrying their load, complaints of conflicting demands (Johnson, 2015 as cited in Philips, 2017). In the opinion of Philips (2017), low morale has damaging effects on officers, supervisors, and the department in general. In the context of the caption of this paper, some of the causes that characterized low morale are commonplace in the LNP. For instance, uncooperative attitudes manifest as “passive resistance” in the LNP. According to the Britannica dictionary, passive resistance is a way of opposing the government or authority without using violence, especially by refusing to obey laws. In the LNP, officers literally refuse to obey orders when they drag their feet, at the same time giving the impression that the orders or job will be carried out. The causes of this devastating attitude are traceable to many factors that include opposition to authority and their cliques (“us vs. them”). In other words, the “us vs them” explains (the ‘us’), officers who passed through the walls of the police academy and convinced that by their competence, they should be managing the affairs of the LNP, not strangers (‘them’) or civilians wearing police uniform without passing through the walls of the police academy. This kind of situation is nothing but demotivation that has serious implications for low morale that has the proclivity to undermine the productivity or performance of the LNP. Moreover, the inclination to bring untrained police officers to preside over the LNP affects the enthusiasm of the trained police officers who are left with the unanswered question of when or how can they progress when section 22.76(b) is used as the justification to bring strangers or untrained police officers to manage them? In the end, they are dispirited and perhaps more inclined to deliberately display lackadaisical behavior or attitude toward the job.

CONCLUSION

This concise paper has not only exposed the irony of the reform that subjected the LNP to politicization but also implied the need to continue the reform by critically harmonizing section 22.76(b) to section 4. It has implicitly emphasized the need for best practices relating to the appointment of Inspector General of Police and Deputy Inspector General of Police. It is not about reducing the President’s constitutional power to appoint the top leadership of the LNP. It has acknowledged and esteemed the President’s constitutional right as stipulated by Article 54-56 but also argued for the adherence to best practices observed within the subregion of West Africa associated with the appointment of IGP and DIGPs.

In other words, because the President has the constitutional power to appoint the IGP and DIPs, this article has intellectualized the need for the President’s appointment to be guided by best practices as mentioned in passing in this study or paper.

The paper has also articulated that instead of the reform reducing the politicization of the LNP, it is deepening the phenomenon. This is because people who have aligned themselves with a political party with the expectation of being appointed are already compromised even before their appointment. Their visible alignment with political parties has set the stage for the public to brand the LNP as partisan police. Technically and by the parity of reasoning, their alignment with political parties contravenes section 3 captioned “Declaration of Principles” (i) which frowns upon a partisan approach to policing.

Based on the theoretical framework (the theory of change) in which the argument is anchored, the paper concludes the need to revisit section 22.76 (b) counter-productive to the development of professionalism in the LNP. It is not to imply or suggest that reviewing this section will eliminate the grounds for politicizing the LNP. However, it could substantially reduce the grounds for politicization because it could remove the advantage of people or individuals aligning themselves with political parties under the ambiance of providing security consultancy but motivated by the desperation for an appointment in the LNP.

In summation, the study has argued that the Liberia National Police is becoming increasingly politicized, which is ironic given the goals of its reform in 2015 through the LNP Act.

DISCLAIM

The views expressed in this paper do not reflect the consent of the Liberia National Police, nor the Universities the author is associated with as an adjunct faculty. The author claims full responsibility for the opinions expressed herein.

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