

# SECURITY AND SOCIO-POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF UNSOLVED KILLINGS AND THE NIGERIAN POLICE'S INVESTIGATIVE SHORTCOMINGS: AN EXPLANATION

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## Abstract

This study explores the security and socio-political ramifications of unsolved killings in Nigeria, emphasizing the investigative shortcomings of the Nigerian Police. The persistent inability to resolve high-profile and everyday homicides has fostered a climate of fear, eroded public trust in law enforcement, and contributed to rising insecurity and social unrest. The research examines key factors responsible for these investigative failures, including inadequate forensic infrastructure, corruption, political interference, and institutional inefficiencies. Using a qualitative research approach, the study will analyze documented cases of unresolved murders, assess their impact on governance and public perception of justice, and evaluate the broader socio-political consequences. The methodology used in this study was a desk-based library method where the knowledge gained from various literatures security experts, legal professionals, law enforcement officers, and affected families, supplemented by secondary sources such as police reports and media analyses. Findings will underscore how investigative lapses contribute to impunity, weaken democratic institutions, and escalate political instability. The study will offer policy recommendations aimed at reforming the Nigerian Police Force's investigative processes, strengthening forensic capabilities, and ensuring greater transparency and accountability in homicide investigations to enhance national security and promote justice.

**Keywords:** Security, Socio-Political, Unsolved Killings, Police, Investigation.

## I. Introduction

Unsolved killings have become a persistent challenge in Nigeria, posing significant threats to national security and socio-political stability. The inability of the Nigerian Police to effectively investigate and resolve these crimes has fueled public distrust in law enforcement, weakened the justice system, and exacerbated insecurity. According to Alemika and Chukwuma (2000), the Nigerian Police Force has long struggled with issues of corruption, inadequate training, and limited forensic capacity, which hinder effective criminal investigations. In recent years, high-profile assassinations and unresolved murders of activists, journalists, and political figures have further deepened concerns about the competence and integrity of law enforcement agencies (Human Rights Watch, 2020). The failure to bring perpetrators to justice not only emboldens criminals but also fosters a culture of impunity, undermining democratic governance and the rule of law (Osah & Omenma, 2019). The socio-political ramifications of these investigative shortcomings are far-reaching, leading to public outrage, violent reprisals, and erosion of faith in state institutions. Studies have shown that unresolved killings contribute to social instability, as affected communities often resort to self-help mechanisms, including vigilante justice and extrajudicial actions (Odekunle, 2004). This research seeks to examine the security implications of unsolved murders in Nigeria and evaluate the structural deficiencies within the Nigerian Police that contribute to investigative failures. By exploring the intersection between law enforcement inefficiencies and socio-political instability, this study aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for policy reforms that can strengthen investigative processes, enhance security, and promote justice in Nigeria.

## II. Conceptual Clarification Security

Security refers to the state of being free from danger, threat, or harm. It encompasses measures taken to protect individuals, communities, organizations, and nations from risks such as physical violence, cyber threats, financial instability, and political instability. Security can be classified into various dimensions, including personal security, national security, economic security, and cyber security. According to Baldwin (1997), security is a condition in which the absence of threats allows individuals or entities to function without fear. In a broader sense, it involves preventive strategies, law enforcement mechanisms, technological advancements, and policy frameworks designed to safeguard assets, lives, and societal stability.

### **Socio-Political Ramifications**

Socio-political ramifications refer to the wide-ranging social and political consequences or effects that arise from a particular event, decision, or phenomenon. These ramifications impact the structure, stability, and interactions within a society, influencing governance, public policies, social cohesion, and institutional trust. Socially, they can lead to shifts in public perception, cultural changes, or societal unrest, while politically; they may affect leadership legitimacy, electoral processes, policymaking, and government authority. According to Almond and Verba (1963), socio-political dynamics shape the attitudes and behaviors of citizens toward political institutions and governance. In essence, socio-political ramifications determine how social and political systems evolve in response to challenges, conflicts, or reforms.

### **Unsolved Killings**

Unsolved killings refer to homicides or murders that remain unresolved due to the inability of law enforcement agencies to identify, apprehend, or prosecute the perpetrators. These cases often lack sufficient evidence, witness cooperation, or effective investigative processes, leading to their stagnation. Unsolved killings can result from factors such as forensic limitations, corruption, political interference, or inadequate police resources. According to Brookman (2005), unresolved homicides contribute to a culture of impunity, erode public trust in the justice system, and may escalate violence in societies where justice is perceived as unattainable. The persistence of such cases poses significant security and socio-political challenges, fostering instability and weakening the rule of law.

### **Police Investigation**

Police investigation refers to the systematic process undertaken by law enforcement agencies to gather evidence, identify suspects, and establish the facts surrounding a crime with the goal of ensuring justice. It involves various techniques such as crime scene analysis, forensic examination, witness interrogation, surveillance, and intelligence gathering. According to Fisher and Fisher (2022), an effective police investigation follows legal and procedural frameworks to uncover the truth, leading to the apprehension and prosecution of offenders. The efficiency of police investigations depends on factors such as expertise, resources, forensic capabilities, and institutional integrity. A well-conducted investigation not only ensures accountability but also strengthens public confidence in the justice system and enhances overall security.

## **III. Literature Review**

The issue of unsolved killings in Nigeria has been a subject of extensive scholarly debate, particularly concerning the Nigerian Police Force's (NPF) investigative shortcomings and the broader security and socio-political ramifications. Scholars argue that the failure to resolve homicides contributes to a cycle of violence, erodes public trust in law enforcement, and weakens democratic governance (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2000). Unresolved killings often result from systemic deficiencies within the police force, including corruption, inadequate training, poor forensic capabilities, and political interference (Osah & Omenma, 2019). This literature review explores the theoretical foundations, causes of investigative failures, socio-political consequences, and proposed solutions to address these challenges.

The persistence of unsolved killings in Nigeria poses a significant threat to national security and socio-political stability. Studies indicate that unresolved homicides foster a culture of impunity, embolden criminals, and weaken public trust in law enforcement institutions (Alemika, 2013). The Nigerian Police Force (NPF), tasked with investigating and preventing crimes, has been consistently criticized for its inefficiencies, corruption, and lack of forensic expertise (Akinyemi, 2017). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2021), Nigeria's homicide rates remain high, particularly in urban areas, with a significant number of cases left unresolved. The failure to investigate and prosecute killings has led to the rise of vigilante justice and self-help security mechanisms, which further undermine state authority and the rule of law (Rotimi, 2005). Political assassinations remain a major concern, as several high-profile murders, such as those of Bola Ige (2001) and Funsho Williams (2006), remain unresolved, leading to public distrust in the judiciary and security agencies (Ojo, 2018). Transparency International (2020) notes that corruption in law enforcement, particularly the demand for bribes to commence investigations, has hindered justice delivery and contributed to widespread disenchantment with democratic processes. Human Rights Watch (2019) identifies political interference as a key impediment to objective police investigations, with many high-profile cases suppressed due to involvement of influential figures. The lack of forensic infrastructure further exacerbates investigative shortcomings, as Nigeria has limited functional forensic laboratories, leading to an overreliance on confessional statements rather than scientific evidence (Adebayo, 2020). The failure of the police to conduct timely and effective investigations has fueled ethnic and religious tensions, as different groups perceive selective justice and institutional bias in handling politically motivated killings (Ekeh, 1975). The implications extend beyond security, affecting democratic consolidation and governance. Anifowose (2011) argues that targeted assassinations weaken political competition and instill fear in opposition groups, thereby undermining electoral integrity. The judiciary's perceived lack of independence in prosecuting politically connected criminals further contributes to the cycle of impunity and weakens institutional trust (Olawale, 2021). Moreover, inadequate funding remains a critical challenge, as the 2022 budget report by the Ministry of Police Affairs highlights the severe underfunding of investigative units, resulting in manpower shortages and outdated policing tools. Studies show that community-policing strategies can help bridge the trust deficit between law enforcement and the public, improving intelligence gathering and crime prevention (Akinyemi, 2017). Strengthening forensic and investigative capacity, ensuring the independence of police investigations, and increasing budgetary allocations for security agencies are essential reforms needed to address these challenges. Without urgent interventions, unresolved killings will continue to erode public confidence in governance, exacerbate insecurity, and weaken the democratic process. Addressing the investigative shortcomings of the Nigerian police requires a multi-faceted approach involving legislative reforms, infrastructural investment, and institutional accountability.

### **Theoretical Perspectives on Police Investigative Shortcomings**

Several criminological and socio-political theories provide insight into the issue of unsolved killings and police inefficiencies. The Broken Windows Theory (Wilson & Kelling, 1982) posits that a failure to address minor crimes and procedural inefficiencies emboldens criminal elements, leading to more severe offenses such as homicides. This perspective suggests that weak investigative mechanisms contribute to increased impunity. The Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) argues that crimes occur due to the convergence of motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardians, highlighting the Nigerian Police's failure as a critical security lapse. Furthermore, the Conflict Theory (Marx, 1848) explains how state institutions, including the police, are often controlled by political elites who manipulate the justice system to serve their interests, thereby obstructing investigations into politically motivated killings.

### **Causes of Unsolved Killings in Nigeria**

One of the major reasons behind unresolved homicides in Nigeria is corruption within the police force. Transparency International (2020) ranks Nigeria among the countries with high levels of police corruption, where bribes and political interference hinder justice. Studies indicate that police officers often lack the autonomy to investigate high-profile killings due to pressure from powerful individuals (Agbibo, 2015). Additionally, the absence of modern forensic and investigative tools severely limits the ability of law enforcement to gather and analyze evidence effectively. Unlike in developed nations where forensic science plays a crucial role in solving crimes, Nigerian police investigations largely depend on eyewitness testimonies, which are often unreliable (Odekunle, 2004).

Another factor is the lack of adequate training for law enforcement personnel. Most police officers receive minimal investigative training and are ill-equipped to handle complex cases (Alemika, 2013). Furthermore, insufficient funding for crime investigation units limits their operational effectiveness. The Nigerian government allocates a significant portion of security funding to the military, leaving the police force underfunded and underequipped (Ekeh, 2021). Political interference is also a major issue, as several unresolved killings involve activists, journalists, and opposition figures whose cases are often ignored or deliberately stalled to protect political interests (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

### **Socio-Political Ramifications of Unresolved Killings**

The inability of law enforcement agencies to resolve killings has profound implications for Nigeria's security and political landscape. Public trust in the police force has significantly declined due to repeated failures in ensuring justice, leading to an increase in vigilantism and mob justice (Okereke, 2022). Studies show that communities affected by unresolved murders often resort to self-help mechanisms, such as the formation of vigilante groups, which sometimes escalate into extrajudicial killings and cycles of violence (Ikelegbe, 2019).

Moreover, unsolved killings contribute to heightened political instability. In many cases, politically motivated assassinations remain unresolved, reinforcing perceptions that the justice system is biased and complicit in state-sponsored crimes (Osah & Omenma, 2019). This weakens democratic institutions and discourages active political participation, as citizens fear repression and targeted violence. The inability to bring perpetrators to justice also emboldens criminal networks, fostering an environment where organized crime and terrorism thrive (Eze, 2021). Thus, the socio-political consequences of unsolved killings in Nigeria are profound. First, they erode public trust in state institutions, particularly the judiciary and law enforcement agencies. Transparency International (2020) highlights that Nigeria ranks among the lowest in terms of trust in public institutions, partly due to unresolved cases of high-profile killings.

Second, unsolved killings have a polarizing effect on Nigeria's multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. Various communities perceive the inability to resolve politically motivated assassinations as evidence of ethnic or religious bias within law enforcement agencies (Ojo, 2018). This perception deepens inter-group tensions and fuels cycles of violence and reprisal attacks, further entrenching insecurity.

Third, the failure to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of politically motivated killings undermines democratic governance. Anifowose (2011) argues that electoral violence and targeted assassinations of political opponents are key factors that weaken Nigeria's democratic consolidation. High-profile political assassinations, such as those of Bola Ige (2001) and Funsho Williams (2006), remain largely unresolved, leading to widespread disenchantment with democratic processes.

### **Security Implications of Unresolved Killings**

Unsolved killings undermine national security by emboldening criminal elements and creating an environment of impunity. According to Alemika (2013), the failure to apprehend and prosecute perpetrators of violent crimes fosters a culture of lawlessness that enables further criminal activities. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2021) reported that

homicide rates in Nigeria remain high, with significant cases remaining unresolved, particularly in urban centers like Lagos, Port Harcourt, and Abuja.

Additionally, scholars argue that unresolved assassinations and politically motivated killings have contributed to the proliferation of vigilante justice. Ekeh (1975) posits that the erosion of state legitimacy leads to the rise of alternative security mechanisms, including ethnic militias and community-based vigilante groups. This fragmentation of security structures further destabilizes the state and weakens its monopoly on the legitimate use of force (Rotimi, 2005).

#### **IV. Empirical Studies**

Several empirical studies have examined the link between police inefficiencies and unresolved killings in Nigeria. In a study conducted by Osah and Omenma (2019), data from 500 respondents across six states revealed that 78% of citizens believe that political interference is the primary reason why homicide cases remain unresolved. Similarly, Human Rights Watch (2020) analyzed 50 high-profile murder cases over a 10-year period, finding that only 12% of these cases resulted in successful prosecutions, underscoring the weaknesses in Nigeria's criminal justice system.

Alemika (2013) conducted an observational study on police investigative procedures in Lagos and Abuja, revealing that 60% of homicide cases lacked forensic evidence due to the absence of modern crime laboratories. Another study by Agbiboa (2015) used in-depth interviews with police officers and found that 70% admitted that bribery and lack of political will were significant barriers to solving murder cases. Additionally, Ekeh (2021) conducted a survey on public perception of police effectiveness and found that 82% of respondents expressed a lack of confidence in the police's ability to solve violent crimes.

Furthermore, Okereke (2022) analyzed the impact of unresolved killings on community security, using case studies from Northern Nigeria, where the rise of vigilante justice was linked to police failures in investigating murders. The study found that communities experiencing frequent unsolved killings were more likely to resort to extrajudicial means, exacerbating the breakdown of law and order.

These empirical findings provide strong evidence of the systemic challenges faced by the Nigerian Police Force and highlight the urgent need for comprehensive reforms to enhance investigative processes and ensure justice for victims of homicide. Addressing these issues will not only improve public trust in law enforcement but also strengthen national security and political stability in Nigeria.

#### **Investigative Shortcomings of the Nigerian Police Force**

The Nigerian Police Force has been repeatedly criticized for its inability to conduct thorough investigations into killings and other violent crimes. Several factors contribute to these investigative shortcomings, including corruption, lack of forensic capacity, political interference, and inadequate funding. Several factors contribute to the investigative inefficiencies of the NPF:

##### **Inadequate Funding**

The NPF suffers from chronic underfunding, which hampers its operational capabilities. Reports indicate that some police divisions receive as little as N15,000 to N30,000 quarterly, insufficient for essential operations such as fueling patrol vehicles and maintaining equipment (Sahara Reporters, 2024). This financial constraint severely limits the ability to conduct thorough investigations.

##### **Corruption**

Corruption within the police force remains a significant barrier to effective law enforcement. Practices such as bribery and extortion are reportedly widespread, undermining public confidence and compromising the integrity of investigations (Professions.ng, n.d.). This corruption leads to a lack of accountability and fosters a perception that the police are more interested in personal gain than in serving justice.



### **Lack of Training and Professionalism**

Many officers lack adequate training in modern investigative techniques and human rights practices. This deficiency results in poor handling of crime scenes, mishandling of evidence, and overall ineffective investigative processes (Professions.ng, n.d.). The absence of continuous professional development leaves officers ill-equipped to address complex criminal activities.

### **Inadequate Resources and Infrastructure**

The NPF faces a severe shortage of essential resources, including vehicles, forensic tools, and communication equipment. This scarcity impedes the ability to respond promptly to incidents and conduct comprehensive investigations (Professions.ng, n.d.). The lack of modern infrastructure further exacerbates these challenges, making it difficult to keep pace with evolving criminal methodologies.

### **Lack of Forensic and Technical Expertise**

Modern crime investigation relies on forensic science, but Nigeria's law enforcement agencies lack the necessary infrastructure and expertise. Akinyemi (2017) notes that the country has few functional forensic laboratories, and crime scene management is often compromised due to poor training and resource constraints. The reliance on confessional statements rather than forensic evidence has resulted in wrongful convictions and unresolved cases.

## **V. Conclusion**

The security and socio-political ramifications of unsolved killings in Nigeria are severe, contributing to lawlessness, public distrust in state institutions, and democratic instability. The investigative shortcomings of the Nigerian Police Force further exacerbate this issue, as corruption, lack of forensic capacity, and inadequate funding hinder effective criminal investigations. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive police reform, investment in forensic science, and the establishment of independent investigative bodies to handle politically sensitive cases. The paper is of the view, that without these measures, the cycle of impunity and insecurity is likely to persist. Thus, strengthening the investigative capacity of the NPF is crucial for restoring public trust, ensuring justice, and improving overall security in Nigeria.

## **VI. Recommendations**

### **Strengthening Forensic and Investigative Capacity**

The Nigerian government should invest in forensic laboratories, modern crime scene investigation tools, and training for law enforcement officers to enhance investigative efficiency.

### **Reducing Political Interference**

Establishing independent investigative bodies free from political influence would ensure impartial handling of high-profile murder cases and promote accountability.

### **Enhancing Police Training and Professionalism**

Regular training programs on forensic science, intelligence gathering, and modern investigative techniques should be prioritized to build a competent police force.

### **Increasing Budgetary Allocation for Security Agencies**

The government should increase funding for the police force, ensuring that resources are adequately allocated for investigations, personnel welfare, and technological advancements.

### **Implementing Community Policing Strategies**

Encouraging community-based policing initiatives would foster collaboration between law enforcement agencies and local communities, improving intelligence gathering and crime prevention.

### **Strengthening Judicial Oversight and Accountability Mechanisms**

A transparent judicial process that holds security agencies accountable for unresolved cases and corruption will help restore public trust in law enforcement institutions.

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