THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNITY POLICE IN SWAZILAND

H.P. Dlamini and N.F. Awasom

ABSTRACT

This article examines on the emergence and development of the Community Police in Swaziland in the early 1990s. The main argument of this paper is that the formal development of community policing in Swaziland in the early 1990s is related to transitions that took place in the Southern African region from belligerency to peace. Historical scholarship has not critically and thoroughly explored this important development in the history of security governance in post-colonial Swaziland. The study methodology is essentially qualitative and the author used newspaper reports, official documents, one-on-one and focused group interviews.

INTRODUCTION

Community policing in Swaziland is a novel development in the post-cold war era. The concept community policing is based on the Anglo-Saxon model which emphasises the National Police involvement of the community in order to maximize their input to local policing agendas (Bayley 1991, Wisler 1991, Mistry 1997, Ejiogu 2010). This type of policing is often considered as a departure from traditional policing which relied largely on the state police (Ferreira 1996).

Although community policing is a burgeoning field in scholarship in Africa, the phenomenon is still largely understudied in Swaziland where there is a vibrant community policing practice with its own history and specificity. The few scholarly works on the Swazi case (see Simelane, 2005; 2008; Kyed, 2015 and Diphoorn and Kyed, 2015). Simelane (2005, 2008) points out the limitations of the postcolonial state in providing security to various communities confronted with rising crime waves. But the international context in which formal community policy emerged has not been thoroughly explored.

This article sets out to examine the emergence and development of the community policing in Swaziland since the end of proxy cold-war reflected in end of the Mozambican turmoil and the demise of apartheid in South Africa. The specific objectives include an examination of the transition from belligerency to peace in Southern Africa and its implications for peace and security in Swaziland; the emergence of informal community policing to respond to the recrudescence of crime and insecurity and the establishment and development of a partnership between the RSPS and community policing in Swaziland..

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarship on community policing in Africa is a flourishing field of scholarship that has attracted a plethora of scholars. Several authors have opined that the end of the Cold War transition societies from authoritarianism to democracy, from communist regime to market economy, from civil war to peace, and from apartheid to democracy are often rocked by the resurgence of criminality, insecurity

and violence which overwhelmed the state security apparatus (see, for instance, Harnischfeger, 2010). The ineffectiveness of the state police force against rising crime waves is a symptom of the limitations of the postcolonial state in security governance in an increasingly complex world. It is this state ineptitude that has given rise to alternative non-state security providers including community policing or vigilante groups (Fourchard, 2008; Harnischfeger, 2010; Pratten, 2008).

There are few scholarly works community policing in Swaziland (see Simelane, 2005; 2008; Kyed, 2015 and Diphoorn and Kyed, 2016) although this phenomenon is deeply rooted in the country and Babe Zwane's private Radio Station devotes its airwaves to it. These pioneer studies on community police governance in Swaziland are important but they are not sufficiently exhaustive and have focused mostly on the initiative of the local Swazi communities or security companies to establish security units for their own use without sufficient attention to the international context.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on qualitative research. Interviews, documentation from the police and newspaper articles for purposes of critical discourse analysis (Wodak and Meyer 2009, Johnstone 2018, Fairhurst & Putnam 2018) were useful. The National Police Commissioner issued a letter of authorisation to conduct this research since the Swazi Community Police work hand in hand with the Royal Swaziland Police Service and issues of policing cannot be studied without an authorisation from the police authorities.

SUMMARY OF STUDY

Community policing in Swaziland was born in the context of transitions from belligerency to peace in Southern Africa. Insecurity increased in Southern Africa owing to the Cold War fought by proxies. Swaziland was bound to pay the price for being surrounded by insurgent neighbours. This situation of pervasive insecurity alarmed King Sobhuza II and he invited all Swazis to be on the alert. King Sobhuza II's slogan, nawe uliphoyisa, which can be translated as 'everyone is a police', shows how the idea of engaging various communities to stand up and fight crime received official endorsement. Swazi communities mobilised themselves into voluntary anti-crime clusters to fight back criminals (interview with Sevendays Tsabedze at Matsapaha, Kwaluseni on 19 June 2016).

When the Cold War came to an end in 1989, it also evaporated in Southern Africa. Swaziland suffered from the transition from belligerency to peace because of its landlocked position. The transitions in both Mozambique and apartheid South Africa were accompanied by the circulation of illicit arms and marauding criminal gangs and they easily found their way into Swaziland (Leggett, 2005: 144-176; Loader & Walker, 2001: 9-35; Bénit-Gbaffou, 2006: 21-26, Simelane (2005, 2008). There was a general outcry in Swaziland against rising criminality in the 1990s and the population responded by constituting voluntary self-defence groups to fight the thieves and checkmate cattle rustling. How did the Swazi security authorities respond to this rising crime waves?

The National Police Commissioner, Mdziniso, convened a symposium at Ezulwini Convention Centre in 1990 to discuss the issue of the resurgence of criminality with the various community leaders with a goal of containing it (Royal Swaziland Police College, Basic Crime Prevention Module, 2008). Different stakeholders including traditional Chiefs and the civil society leaders were invited and it was resolved that a partnership should be established between the National Police and the communities to combat crime. Partnering with the various communities to fight crime was a new job description for the RSPS (Interview with Millicent Dlamini, 30 July 2016).

The Swazi Police launched the Crime Prevention Committees Initiative (CPCI) in 1993 all over the Kingdom of Swaziland. The Crime Prevention Committee is the name by which the community police was originally known. This committee was a non-statutory group of volunteers that were elected to serve their various constituencies in the maintenance of peace and security. The Statutory Instrument under which the Swazi Crime Prevention Committee was constituted is the colonial Swazi Administration Act of 1950. This Act empowered traditional rulers to mobilise their constituents into committees to fight against crime. Under this 1950 Act, the traditional ruler of a

chiefdom was automatically the head of the policing committee in his constituency. The Crime Prevention Committees which the Swazi Police established in the Kingdom of Swaziland quickly changed its name to Community Police in the 2000s when some of their members started wearing uniforms like police and when such an appellation was being used elsewhere for such voluntary anti-crime associations (Interview with Millicent Dlamini on 4 June 2016).

The Swaziland Royal Police Service periodically organise workshops on crime prevention. In 1998 the Swaziland Royal Police Service organised a workshop for the Community Police at Matsapha Correctional Service Auditorium. The workshop had to be organised in 1998 although the Community Police had been in existence since 1993 because the Police services had to wait for the return of Swazi experts being trained in the field of community policing who were studying in the United Kingdom. The first people to be trained to train the Community Police were the police officers. On their return to Swaziland, they commenced the organisation of national workshops.

CONCLUSION

Formal Community policing in emerged within the context of transition from belligerency to peace in Southern Africa which was accompanied by widespread insecurity. This mobilised the Swazi countryside into self-defence groups for their own security. The RSPS partnered with the various communities in containing crime. The emergence of community policing in Swaziland is in line with worldwide trends to promote security governance, and to reconceptualise the national police in order to make it more accountable to the population and more efficient in its crime prevention strategy (Shearing & Stenning, 1983: 493-506; Shearing, 1998; Shearing & Kempa , 2000). Community policing is definitely a new development in policing philosophy in post-independence Swaziland.

RECOMMENDATION

Community policy is a welcome endeavour in the history of policing in Swaziland but communities must assume their full responsibility in supporting those who volunteer to provide them complementary security. It is not possible for the state to fund community police as was expressed by many during field work. The state belongs to everybody and everybody is the state.

ACKNOWLEDMENTS

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