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The Political Economy of Kidnapping and Insecurity in Nigeria

Beyond News and Rumours

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Editors

The Political Economy of Kidnapping and Insecurity in Nigeria

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Chapter 1

Beyond News and Rumours: Political Economy of Kidnapping and Insecurity in Nigeria



J. Shola Omotola and Samuel Oyewole

Abstract Cases of kidnapping and missing person have become too common in daily news, rumours and gossips in Nigeria. The fear of kidnapping has practically become the begging of wisdom in the country. It is against this background that this volume seeks to understand the phenomenon of kidnapping in Nigeria beyond the news and rumours of forceful disappearance and missing persons. Accordingly, this chapter provides an introductory insight into the political economy of kidnapping and the attendant security concerns. The subject matter is situated in the contexts of post/neo-colonial contradictions, state failure/weaknesses, neo/patrimonialism, democratic contradictions, competition for power and scarce resources, cost and benefits, frustration and aggression, greed and grievances, among other relevant political economy perspectives.

Kidnapping has become one of the major threats to development and security aspirations of the government and people of Nigeria in the twenty-first century. This horrendous act has flourished as a strategy and/or tactic of engagements of various actors (individuals and organisations) that are involved in armed robbery, baby

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factory, banditry, electoral violence, human trafficking, insurgency, maritime piracy, militancy, ritual killing, terrorism and slavery. Accordingly, forceful and mysterious disappearance has become a subject of daily news, rumours, gossips, prayer points, security reports and policy concerns or debates in Nigeria. With thousands of cases of missing people and forceful disappearances reported annually, growing international profile of the hostage crisis situations, and the emergence of multi-billion naira (or multi-million dollar) ransom enterprises, Nigeria has become a leading hotspot of kidnapping globally in the last two decades (ACLED, 1997–2019; Control Risks, 2014; Contellis, 2021; GTD, 1970–2018; NBS, 2010–2012; 2018; NYA, 2017; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Osumah and Aghedo, 2011; Oyewole, 2016a; SB Morgan, 2020; Special Contingency Risks, 2012; SRM, 2021).

Despite the alarming threats of kidnapping in Nigeria, there are limited academic attempts to investigate the phenomenon holistically. The few available studies on the subject are too limited in theoretical, geographical, empirical and analytical scope. They mostly focus on one or few regions of the country, theoretical perspectives, thematic issues, actors and cases of kidnapping and hostage crisis situation/s. For instance, existing studies are dominantly focused on kidnapping by Niger Delta militants in the South-South and Boko Haram in the North-East of the country (Aghedo, 2015; Ehwarieime, 2009; Ibaba, 2008; LaMonica and Omotola, 2014; Danjibo and Nwiline, 2009; Oriola, 2016; Oyewole, 2016a; Zenn, 2014). Recently, kidnapping in Nigeria has been reduced to narrative of Boko Haram abduction of Chibok and Dapchi schoolgirls in 2014 and 2018, respectively (Habila, 2017; Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021; Oyewole, 2016b; Parkinson and Hinshaw, 2021; Zenn, 2014, 2018). Besides, existing books on hostage taking, kidnapping and forceful disappearance in Nigeria are mostly limited to thematic or case narratives of one or two authors (Boateng and Slota, 2015; Habila, 2017; Nwadiogbu, 2011; Oriola, 2016; Parkinson and Hinshaw, 2021).

It is against this background that this volume is necessitated by the overriding need for a holistic and deeper understanding of kidnapping in Nigeria. Beyond news, rumours and gossips of forceful disappearance and missing persons, this volume presents the political economy of kidnapping and national security in Nigeria. The volume examines different forms, trends, actors, geographical factors, socio-cultural atmospheres, economic conditions, political forces and international dynamics that shaped the threats of kidnapping in Nigeria. It investigates the political and socioeconomic perspectives of the causes, manifestations and consequences of kidnapping in Nigeria as well as some of the control measures that have been adopted at different levels of governance and their effectiveness. This edited volume provides unique insights on the subject matter, as the first major attempt by multiple authors to offer holistic, or at least extensive multidimensional and multidisciplinary, perspectives on the phenomenon of kidnapping and the political-economy dynamics of forceful disappearance in the country.

The Threats of Kidnapping in Nigeria

Kidnapping is a situation that occurs when a person is forcibly seized, taken away and illegally confined against freely given consent by another person or organisation, with the aim of using the victim (hostage) as an object of bargaining with an individual, organisation or deity/god for political and/or socioeconomic benefits (Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021). This phenomenon constitutes a major threat to human and national security. As a matter of human security, it undermines the fundamental human rights of individual victims, whose rights to life, dignity, personal liberty, fair hearing and privacy, freedom of conscience, expression, thoughts and movement, and freedom from discrimination, torture, slavery and servitude are often denied. It equally undermines national security, as kidnapping and hostage situation exposes the inadequate capacity or failure of the state in enforcing law and order, protecting its citizens and their fundamental human rights, and securing the bases of its authority and legitimacy.

Nigeria is a notable hotspot in the global map of kidnapping, forceful disappearance and hostage taking in twenty-first century. Between 1970 and 2018, Global Terrorism Database (GTD) recorded 583 cases of kidnapping by terrorists in Nigeria, which accounted for 23.42 percent and 4.23 percent of the sub-Saharan Africa and global totals, respectively (GTD, 1970–2018). These involved no fewer than 4599 hostages, that is, 21.97 percent and 3.668 percent of the regional and global totals, respectively. Reports of the International Maritime Bureau (IMB, 2011–2020) equally show that Nigeria accounted for 5.98 percent of the 4027 total crew taken hostage aboard and 59.9 percent of the 474 that were kidnapped and taken onshore in piracy and armed robbery against ships globally between 2010 and 2019. With 412 cases documented by Armed Conflict Location and Events Data Project (ACLED) between 1997 and 2019, Nigeria accounted for 8.5 percent of abductions and forced disappearances in African armed conflicts.

Although the records of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and other security institutions on kidnapping are poorly developed and maintained for research purposes, the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) provides some disjointed and inconsistent details that are useful in this case. At least, 7194 cases of missing persons were reported to the police between 2002 and 2007, and another 1285 cases between 2010 and 2011 (NBS, 2010–2012). One such recent report documented 1134 cases of kidnapping in 2017 (NBS, 2018). Nevertheless, concise, comprehensive and consistent report or dataset on kidnapping in Nigeria are hard to come by. Cases are often underreported, underestimated, downplayed and/or politicised by frontline stakeholders, including victims and their relatives, media, law enforcement agencies, political leaders and other relevant government officials, private firms and civil society organisations (CSOs). Accordingly, the threats of kidnapping are more felt than acknowledged in Nigeria.

Cases of kidnapping and missing persons have become too common in daily news, rumours and gossips in Nigeria. Prayers for protection against kidnapping and safe release of hostages have become officially encouraged, and testimonies of

victims of unsuccessful abduction and survivors of captivity are miraculous presentations in the public. Measures to avoid or survive kidnapping and forceful disappearance have become part of normal messages, advice and training at homes, schools, places of worship, corporate bodies and some other organisations. Although the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) later distanced itself from it, a document published as “Security awareness and education handbook for corps members and staff” highlighted high-risk roads across the country and advised its community to prepare to pay ransom if any of them is kidnapped (Israel, 2021). Despite the disclaimer, this mirrors a series of travel warnings that have been issued by foreign governments about the country. It shows how alarming and widespread the threat of kidnapping has become in Nigeria. Accordingly, the fear of kidnapping has practically become the begging of wisdom in the country.

Kidnapping in Nigeria has its distant origin in pre-colonial era, amidst records of forceful disappearance that characterised war strategies, captive diplomacy, ritual killings or murder, human trafficking, slave raids and trades across the Sahel and the Atlantic (Domingues da Silva, 2017; Oyewole, 2016c; Wright, 2007). This, among other crises, was affected by colonial order, which forced kidnapping to recede into underworld enterprises (Baxter, 2020; White, 2000). Yet, the failure of the post-colonial state to deliver on the socioeconomic and security aspirations of the population has increasingly inspired the resurgence of kidnapping and related enterprises across the country (Ibaba, 2008; Ehwarieme, 2009; LaMonica and Omotola, 2014; Odoemene, 2014; Oriola, 2016; Osumah and Aghedo, 2011). Nigeria has recently become a theatre of hostage taking, forceful disappearance and kidnapping that is operated by different armed non-state groups, which are involved in armed robbery (on the roads and waterways), baby factory, banditry, human trafficking, insurgency, maritime piracy, militancy, electoral violence, ritual killing, terrorism and trade in human body parts.

Principal among organised players in kidnapping enterprises in Northern Nigeria is Boko Haram (officially known as *Jama’atu Ahlis Suna Lidda’awati Wal Jihad*: “the People Committed to the Prophet’s Teaching and Jihad”), its Anzaru (*Jama’atu Ansarul Musilimina fi Biladin Sudan*: “Defender of Islam in the Land of Black Africa”) and ISWAP (*Wilāyat al-Islāmiyya Gharb Afrīqiyyah*: “Islamic State West African Province”) factions, and its allies, such as Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and bandit groups (Oyewole, 2016a; Oriola et al., 2021). In Southern and coaster Nigeria, kidnapping is largely driven by Niger Delta (ex)-militant groups, political thugs, pirate groups, traffickers, ritualists, baby factories and syndicate groups (Aghedo, 2015; Oriola, 2016; Oyewole, 2015a). More alarming, this trend of kidnapping has become transnational, as Nigerian perpetrators have extended their secured bases and sanctuaries, recruits and collaborators, theatres of operation, targets of victims and strategic objectives beyond the country. The Northern Nigerian-based Boko Haram and bandits have been involved in records of kidnapping across the Lake Chad region, whilst the militants and pirates in the South have operated across the Gulf of Guinea (Oyewole, 2016a). These have undermined human and national security in Nigeria, and by extension regional and global security.

Kidnapping in the Framework of Political Economy

The rise and enduring existence of kidnapping in Nigeria cannot be fully understood outside its political-economy framework. The causes, characters, consequences and challenges of controlling kidnapping in Nigeria are deeply rooted in the complex political economy of the country (Ehwarieme, 2009; Odoemene, 2014; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Oriola, 2016; Osumah and Aghedo, 2011; Otu and Nnam, 2018). Political economy is the reality, the subfield and the framework of analysis that deals with complex interactions between and among economic and political forces. As a reality of life, political economy can be described as the authoritative allocation of scarce resources to satisfy unlimited wants. This is a major subject matter that has emerged as a critical subfield in the fields of economics and political science. It has also become an indispensable framework of analysis in these and other fields of studies that are interested in governmental and non-governmental distributions of resources, economic power arrangement and the implications for the state, as well as the politics of want, need, resources, wealth, scarcity and penury (Oyewole et al., 2023).

Different political-economy perspectives can be considered to explain the phenomenon of kidnapping in Nigeria. For instance, Marxism considered the introduction of private property into primitive society and the resultant accumulative tendency of individuals in capitalist state as the roots of all evil. This has produced capitalism as a stage of economic development, where society is divided into two irreconcilable classes: the oppressed masses that supply labour (proletarians) and the few that control the means of production and wealth of nations (bourgeoisies). The expectation of the Marxists, Neo-Marxists and Post-Marxists is that class society cannot avoid revolution or at resistance of the masses (Barrow, 1993; Marx, 2010), including kidnapping as an instrument of resistance in conflict and criminal contexts (Oriola, 2016). Accumulative tendency is equally evident in kidnapping for ransom, ritual and baby.

Liberal scholarship also offers relevant perspectives on the political economy of kidnapping in Nigeria. One of the areas of consensus among liberal social contract theorists is that the emergence and continuous existence of the state is necessitated by the need to protect the rights and freedom of individuals under its jurisdiction (Johari, 2012). Kidnapping as a conflict strategy or criminality violates the rights of the victims and their social contract to be protected by the state. Accordingly, the failed state thesis assumes that kidnapping and other conflict or criminal strategies are products or indicators of the weaknesses, fragility, failure and possibly the collapse of the state (Nozick, 1974; Omotola and Alumona, 2016). For liberal democratic theory, competitive authoritarianism, failed democratisation, democratic backslide, democratisation in poverty, inequality and divided societies, as well as illiberal, electoral and garrison democracies can equally fuel political and criminal resistance, where kidnapping is considered as a key strategy (Collier, 2010; Nnoli, 2011; Omotola, 2021).

Scholarships on relative deprivation, frustration and aggression, and greed and grievance are also relevant perspectives to understand the political economy of

kidnapping in Nigeria. The growing levels of poverty, inequality, injustice, unemployment and underemployment, crude death, dependency rate, corruption, ethnicity, violence, political instability as well as food, environmental, social and human insecurity have inspired feelings of deprivation in majority of the Nigerian population, especially the youth (Adenuga et al., 2023; LaMonica and Omotola, 2014; Nnoli, 2011; Omotola and Alumona, 2016; Omotola, 2021; Oriola et al., 2021). This development has provided actors who are involved in kidnapping with motivations and opportunities, which sometimes include varying degrees of societal acceptability (Ehwarieme, 2009; Ibaba, 2008; Danjibo and Nwiline, 2009; Oriola, 2016; Osumah and Aghedo, 2011; Oyewole, 2015b). This is related to the argument of frustration and aggression thesis. The failure or weaknesses of the Nigerian state and democratic institutions to satisfactorily advance the socioeconomic and security aspirations of the masses have fuelled the frustrations of many, out of which some mostly youthful people have opted for aggressive political and/or criminal resistance, where kidnapping is only one of the means to achieve desired ends (Ehwarieme, 2009; Nnoli, 2011; Omotola, 2009; Oriola, 2016; Osumah and Aghedo, 2011; Otu and Nnam, 2018).

Greed and grievance thesis assumes that political and criminal resistance such as kidnapping is motivated and designed to advance the interests of individual perpetrators and their organisations that are involved and their society (Collier, 2010; Oriola, 2016; Oyewole, 2015a). On one hand, kidnapping and other strategies of armed resistance are instruments of bargaining state–society–citizen relationships, as it serves as one of the means to strategically mobilise for, and communicate, societal grievances (Aghedo, 2015; Ehwarieme, 2009; Ibaba, 2008; Oriola, 2016; Oyewole and Omotola, 2022). On the other hand, kidnapping is a means to achieve greedy wants and desires of individuals and in some cases organisations that are involved. In this case, individual wants and desires are quick wealth, excitement, adventure, relevance and power (Boateng and Slota, 2015; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Osumah and Aghedo, 2011; Otu and Nnam, 2018; Otu et al., 2018; Oyewole, 2016c). Meanwhile, organisational and tactical ends—especially for insurgent, militant, terrorist and in some cases bandit and pirate groups—are to secure funding through ransom, recruitment of hostages into fighting forces and support services, maintaining loyalty of members through sharing of female hostages for their sexual pleasure and ransomed resources, and the use of hostages as human cover from state reprisal (Habila, 2017; Nwadiogbu, 2011; Oriola, 2016; Oyewole, 2015a, 2015c; 2016a, 2016b; Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021; Parkinson and Hinshaw, 2021).

Utilitarian and deterrence perspectives can be keyed into the liberal scholarship, with the assumption that kidnapping exists in political and/or criminal resistance because the actual or perceived benefits surpass the cost (Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Otu and Nnam, 2018; Weinstein, 2007). The weakness of the state institutions to guarantee the rule of law, due to corruption, patron-clientelism and neo/patrimonialism, have minimise the possible cost that can deter kidnapping in Nigeria. The prospects of arresting and sentencing kidnappers and other criminals have continued to decline, whilst some that were arrested are released or not charged

to court for political expedience of “order from above”. Meanwhile, the growing records and publicity of hostage negotiations, political concessions and ransom payments have raised the benefits of kidnapping in Nigeria (Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Osumah and Aghedo, 2011; Oyewole, 2015c, 2016a; SB Morgan, 2020). Accordingly, the declining deterrence for kidnapping is increasing the utilitarian values of this criminal act.

There are indications in liberal literature showing that the threats of kidnapping have negative consequences on citizenship and their fundamental human rights, public/civic space and the state of governance, socioeconomic development, national and human security and the international image of a country. Some of the few available studies on Nigeria have provided insights on the implications of kidnapping for education and (local and foreign) investment as well as their effects on employment opportunities, poverty and inequality (Aghedo, 2015; Badiora, 2015; Oyewole 2016b; Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021; Parkinson and Hinshaw, 2021). These among other reasons are considered as compelling enough for all concerned (state and non-state) actors to rise in defence of universally and constitutionally guaranteed rights and freedom of the threatened population in Nigeria. Despite the well-known concern for the weakness of state institution capacity, the spirit of social contract between the government and the governed as well as natural and universal rights, humanitarianism and responsibility to protect demand for political commitments to suppress the threats of kidnapping in Nigeria.

The Organisation of the Book

This volume is made up of 19 chapters. Aside from the introductory and concluding chapters, the rest of this volume revolves around five themes. The first theme is on theoretical and historical frameworks of analysis, which covers the next three chapters. In Chap. 2, Samuel Oyewole and J. Shola Omotola survey different forms of kidnapping in Nigeria and provide a strategic framework for understanding this phenomenon as one means with multiple ends. The prevailing tendency to lump diverse cases of kidnapping in Nigeria together and assess them as one means with homogenous strategy and uniform goal is generally misleading and academically restrictive. This equally tends to encourage one-size-fit-all responses. Using the variation in the nature of perpetrators’ organisations and strategies, particularly the immediate and ultimate goals and how they are pursued, this chapter presents a typology of kidnapping in Nigeria. With multidisciplinary and multidimensional orientations, an expansive scope is advanced for kidnapping research, policy, risk assessment and general public understanding in Nigeria.

In Chap. 3, Akachi Odoemene provides the historical trajectories of kidnapping in Nigeria. Kidnapping was primarily employed as a means to acquire humans for ritual sacrifice and slavery during the pre-colonial era. In this case, hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people were captured in pre-colonial Nigeria for sacrifice as well as slavery locally or internationally through the infamous

trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic slave trade. This development was largely sponsored or supported by the pre-colonial state, although it equally involves elements of individualism, which grew with the European imperialism and colonialism. Nevertheless, the colonialists outlawed and introduced measures to suppress slavery, slave trade and human sacrifice as well as kidnapping for these purposes. These forced kidnappings to the underworld in colonial Nigeria, a trend that endured in post-colonial period until the last two decades. The rise of Niger Delta militancy, Boko Haram insurgency and banditry has increased the record of kidnapping in Nigeria astronomically and changed the national security landscape negatively.

Azeez Olaniyan examines the menace of kidnapping as a product of ungoverned spaces in Nigeria. His analysis in Chap. 4, interrogates the concept of ungoverned spaces as well as the debates about its realities and applicability, whilst paying attention to their connection to criminality across the world. It is on this basis that the chapter explores the nexus between declining, poor, or weak state capacity to govern spaces and emerging threats of kidnapping in Nigeria. With poorly governed forests across the country, kidnappers and other criminal elements have found a safe haven to develop their capacities, plan their operations and hide their hostages. The chapter also shows how poorly governed and policed roads, cities, schools and homes have become targeted spots of armed attacks and kidnapping across Nigeria.

The second theme of the volume is on insurgency and kidnapping in Nigeria, which is made up of two chapters. In Chap. 5, J. Shola Omotola and Femi Fayomi explore oil-related militancy and kidnapping in the Niger Delta, the region that is responsible for most of the oil and gas production, which is the mainstay of national economy, in Nigeria. The Niger Delta has witnessed the emergence of several militant and criminal groups due to oil-related socioeconomic deprivation, environmental crisis, and political marginalisation of the minorities in the region. It is against this background that kidnapping has been employed as one of the tactics and strategies in advancing greed and grievances of militant and criminal groups in the Niger Delta region. This chapter examines the political economy of causes, manifestation, consequences and control of oil-related kidnapping in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

In Chap. 6, Rauf Tunde Sakariyau and Ismail Bello examine the involvement of Boko Haram insurgents in kidnapping in the northern part of Nigeria. The chapter adopts failed state theory to understand how the weakness of state institutional capacity and particularly failure of security architecture encouraged kidnapping perpetrated by Boko Haram, Bandits and other unscrupulous elements in Nigeria. It shows how Boko Haram and related groups that are involved in insurgency and terrorism in Nigeria and beyond have employed kidnapping to gain international attention, resource base and organisational capacity. The chapter generally provides insights on evolution, nature and consequences of Boko Haram's kidnapping.

The third theme of this volume, which covers Chaps. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, focus on non-insurgent kidnapping. Amidst these, Ayegbusi Talabi Rasheed's Chap. 7 examines the involvement of armed bandits in kidnappings across Nigeria. The chapter situates banditry in Nigeria in the interconnected contexts of the adverse effects of climate change, ungoverned spaces, terror-crime nexus, and farmer-harder conflict.

Whilst kidnapping by bandits in northern Nigeria has a complex connection to insurgency and terrorism in the region, this chapter shows that it is mostly motivated by ransom, and therefore better considered as non-insurgent as argued in Chap. 2. It provides insights into history, causes, actors, strategies and tactics, consequences, state responses and their inadequacies, and the way forward on kidnapping by armed bandits in Nigeria.

Kidnapping has become a multi-million-naira business with criminal benefactors in Nigeria. Accordingly, Michael B. Aleyomi and Amos Olajubu examine the phenomenon of kidnapping for ransom in Chap. 8. This form of kidnapping has been inspired by widespread poverty and inequality, greed and grievances of many idle youths, weakness of the state in policing, as well as its low cost and high profitability. It occurs at any time and in any location, including homes, schools, religious sites, streets, markets, business establishments, farms and highways, during the day and at night. This chapter generally provides insights into the manifestation of kidnapping for ransom across Nigeria, whilst paying attention to the relationship between perpetrators and the victims, how negotiations are usually carried out, the mode of payment of ransom, and finally the impacts of kidnapping on the hostages.

Ritual-motivated kidnapping is another alarming criminal violence in Nigeria. The belief in traditional, religious and superstitious power of human spirit, blood, body and/or body parts exhumed from grave or purposively murdered to advance materialist interests such as fame, favour, power, protection, success and wealth have inspired a growing trend of kidnapping for this purpose in Nigeria and beyond. As a consequence, Samuel Oyewole and Charles Ekpo's Chap. 9 examines the phenomenon of kidnapping for ritual in Nigeria, paying attention to motivations, evolution, geographical spread and concentration, frequency of incidents, actors and targeted victims, pattern and strategies, and the security implications.

The phenomenon of kidnapping in the context of baby factories is interrogated by Freedom C. Onuoha, Christopher Ewuzie Obianagwa and Ndubuisi Isaac in Chap. 10. In this case, baby factory refers to a practice in which some unmarried women and girls are harboured in confinements and encouraged, deceived or forced to become pregnant and subsequently give up their babies for sale after delivery. This chapter examines how kidnapping is employed by baby factory operators in Nigeria to recruit young women and girls, who are deceived, lured and/or coerced to bear babies for sale. It interrogates the political-economy underpinnings of kidnapping in baby factories, with the drivers and effects on contemporary Nigerian society.

In Chap. 11, Aluko Opeyemi Idowu discusses the nexus between kidnapping and human trafficking in Nigeria, which is rooted in slave trade. In some cases, kidnapping has become a source of recruitment for human trafficking. In other cases, human trafficking has emerged as kidnapping by other means, as many are forced or deceived into slavery. The illicit practices have flourished with the trend of poverty, illiteracy, demand for cheap labour, demand for commercial sex, shortage of attention for the rights of the vulnerable groups of people, social factors and cultural practices, conflict and natural disaster, profit generated from this and associated businesses, shortage of safe migration options and availability of victims. This

chapter provides insights into the political economy of kidnapping in the context of human trafficking in Nigeria, whilst paying attention to the causes, manifestation and consequences.

The fourth theme of this volume, between Chaps. 12 and 14, focuses on new frontiers of kidnapping in Nigeria. The gender dimensions of kidnapping in Nigeria are interrogated by Tunde Agara in Chap. 12. Although there is a gender dimension to kidnapping by the Niger Delta militants, the Boko Haram insurgents and terrorists have taken this to the next level, especially since the abduction of Chibok and Dapchi schoolgirls. The chapter investigates female involvement in kidnapping as either agents and/or victims. Women are involved as agents in terrorist activities as suicide bombers and helpers of male terrorists, whilst some are victims as sex slaves and forced marriages. The chapter interrogates engendered kidnapping mostly by Boko Haram in Nigeria, drawing from the experience of fragile and conflict-prone states and the activities of politically motivated militias, organised crime and the drugs mafia.

Transnationalisation of kidnapping in Nigeria is interrogated by John Sunday Ojo, Oluwole Ojewale and Kazeem Oyedele Lamidi in Chap. 13. The transnational expansion of the organisations and operations of the Islamist Boko Haram, which is based in northern Nigeria, has redefined national sovereignty, as it has spilled into neighbouring nations such as Chad, Cameroon and Niger Republic. The activities of armed militant and criminal groups in the Niger Delta and other coastal areas of Nigeria have also become transnational, as they accounted for significant portion of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. These organisations have turned kidnapping in Nigeria from local or national activities to transnational activities. This chapter examines the causes, manifestation, hotspots, implications and possible control of transnational kidnapping, as regards various borders that Nigeria shared with other countries and the international waters, ranging from the North to the South and the East to the West.

Beyond the transnational manifestation of kidnapping by Nigerian-based organisations and network, both local/national and transnational dimensions of kidnapping have had significant implications on the country's international image. In Chap. 14, Olusola Ogunnubi and Dare Leke Idowu examine the challenges of Nigeria's international image in the context of kidnapping for ransom. Beyond scholarship on how kidnapping depicts the country as highly risky for business, this chapter interrogates the international political context that explains the lethal implications of the menace for Nigeria's image and the assertion of its regional power status. This chapter further examines the implication of this trend for the Nigeria's tourism industry.

The fifth theme of this volume, which covers Chaps. 15, 16, 17 and 18, focuses on state and societal responses to kidnapping in Nigeria. In Chap. 15, Gbeke Adenuga examines state responses to the menace of kidnapping in Nigeria. The chapter assesses the threats of kidnapping across the country with special attention to their regional variation. Thereafter, it assesses different measures adopted by the Nigerian state, including legal, political and military responses to the menace of

kidnapping. The analysis is premised on a combination of theories, including rational choice, deterrent, relative deprivation and conspiracy theories. The chapter shows that the lack of or inadequate political will to effectively arrest and prosecute kidnappers, the politics of resource control and complicity on the part of the political, religious and military elites of the country are undermining state responses against the menace. It is on these bases that political restructuring, subnational policing and proactive strategies are recommended.

Despite a series of efforts to curb kidnapping by state institutions, the menace has endured in Nigeria. Nevertheless, efforts to control the threats of kidnapping in Nigeria transcend state-centric reductionism, as non-state actors are equally involved. Accordingly, Elijah Olorunsuwa Ola and Michael B Aleyomi examine non-state responses to kidnapping in Chap. 16. In this case, civil society groups have played important roles in public education, policy advocacy and hostage negotiation, whilst vigilante groups are involved in the fight against kidnappers and rescuing of hostages. This chapter observes the need for better synergy between state and non-state responses against kidnapping and insecurity. Regardless of the efficiency of non-state responses to kidnapping and other criminalities, this chapter equally observes that state security forces must be re-organised, re-oriented and re-equipped to take on their tasks, as over-reliance on vigilante groups might turn out to be a ticking time bomb.

Building on the foundation laid in Chaps. 8 and 15, Seun Bamidele, Dickson Ajisafe, and Babatope M. Ajiboye interrogates the idea of hostage negotiations and kidnapping in Nigeria. Beyond its reflection on manifestations of kidnapping in Nigeria, Chap. 17 examines the debates on the rationales for negotiation with the kidnappers, relevant procedures and actors (such as state institutions, organisations and individuals) that are involved, and the consequences. In this consideration, the chapter equally pays attention to the role of ransoming in negotiation and hostage crisis management, and in the broader scheme of solution for the menace of kidnapping in Nigeria.

In Chap. 18, Chika Asogwa examines media coverage of kidnapping and journalism practices in the hostage crisis in Nigeria. The media have a challenging responsibility of drawing public attention to the threat of kidnapping, whilst also assisting in combating the threat. In some cases, these tend to be contradictory, as information are double edge sword that can make or unmake security. This chapter generally assesses the responses of various media to kidnapping and the possible implications. It attempted to determine the sources of media stories on kidnapping in Nigeria as well as ascertain the category of kidnap stories most reported in various media and the key issues about kidnapping as reported in selected media.

Beyond the five themes, Chap. 19 by Samuel Oyewole and J Shola Omotola provides the concluding reflection on the political economy of kidnapping and the feasibility of kidnap-free Nigeria. This chapter provides a concluding reflection on the causes, trends, forms, spatial distribution, actors, strategies and consequences of kidnapping in Nigeria, as well as measures to control it and their effectiveness. It also offers some considerable ways forward.

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Chapter 2

One Means, Multiple Ends: A Strategic Framework of Understanding Kidnapping in Nigeria



Samuel Oyewole and J. Shola Omotola

Abstract There is growing academic attention for kidnapping in Nigeria, although most studies on the subject are characterised by limited thematic and geographical focuses, which have left the study area with weak basis for generalisation at the national level. Accordingly, kidnapping is often treated as a homogenous strategy in Nigeria, instead of one means that leads to multiple ends. After a review of extant literature on kidnapping and its typology in Nigeria, this chapter provides a strategic framework for understanding the subject. This is premised on the variations in the organisation of the actors that are involved in kidnapping in Nigeria, their (immediate, medium and ultimate) objectives, capacity to articulate political agenda, support for societal demands, mobilisation through strategic communication, and operational terrains. In the final analysis, this chapter broadly classifies kidnapping in Nigeria into insurgent (with terrorists, militants and guerrillas as actors) and non-insurgent (involving politicians, political parties and thugs, armed bandits, sea robbers and pirates, human traffickers, baby factories, fraudsters and ritualists). A framework of understanding the strategies and tactics of kidnapping in their various forms in Nigeria is important for academic generalisation, and effective responses of the victims and their relatives, the civil society groups, media, government and security forces.

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Introduction

There is a growing body of knowledge on the subject of kidnapping in Nigeria. Over the years, significant academic attention has been devoted to assess the causes, characters, consequences and control of kidnapping in the whole or selected regions of Nigeria (Aghedo, 2015; Akpan, 2010; Badiora, 2015; Danjibo and Nwiline, 2009; Ehwareme, 2009; Ibrahim and Mukhtar, 2017; Odoemene, 2014; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Osumah and Aghedo, 2011; Otu and Nnam, 2018; Oriola, 2016; Oyewole, 2015a, 2016a, 2016b). However, the strategic framework of kidnapping in Nigeria has received limited research attention. This is largely responsible for the prevailing tendency to present kidnapping in Nigeria as one means with a considerably homogenous strategy and uniform ends. In this manner, diverse cases of kidnapping have been lumped up, with little or no attention to their unique characteristics and distinguish forms. These largely accounted for one-size-fits-all policy prescriptions and responses to the menace.

Most studies on the subject of kidnapping in Nigeria have focused on one form of kidnapping or the other, with little or no efforts to identify the proper place of their case study in the general framework. Accordingly, most academic attention is generally on kidnapping for ransom (Odoemene, 2014; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019), and specifically the involvement of militant groups in the Niger Delta region (Aghedo, 2015; Ehwareme, 2009; Danjibo and Nwiline, 2009; Oriola, 2016; Ibaba, 2008) and Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region (Habila, 2017; Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021; Oyewole, 2016a; Zenn, 2014, 2018). These have generated few attempts to compare the experiences of the country in the Niger Delta and the Lake Chad regions (Oyewole, 2016b). Few other studies on kidnapping in the country have examined its connection to fraud (Otu, 2013) and ritual murder (Oyewole, 2016c). Many other studies have identified kidnapping and attributed a varying degree of importance to it, which is insignificant in most cases, in the general framework of politics, electoral violence, armed conflicts, piracy, armed robbery and banditry among others in Nigeria (LaMonica and Omotola, 2014; Kuna and Ibrahim, 2015; Obi and Rustad, 2011; Omilusi, 2017; Omotola, 2021a; Onuoha, 2012; Taft and Haken, 2015). Amidst these, there are inadequate academic efforts to develop a strategic framework that is concise and coherent for holistic understanding of kidnapping in Nigeria.

Against this background, this chapter examines different forms of kidnapping in Nigeria, and offers a typology that seeks to provide a holistic framework of this subject. This is important to broaden and enrich academic debate, and attract more attention to different underexplored areas, on the subject matter. This is also expected to improve both theoretical and empirical research, and make them more relevant to societal realities. A good knowledge of the subject's typology and its framework of understanding is required to guide threat assessment of individuals, organisation and government, policy advocacy of the civil society groups (CSG), policy formulation by political leaders, policy implementation and particularly responses of the security institutions, communication of the media, and perception and understanding of the general public. Hence, this chapter subsequently examines

a framework for understanding the subject matter, covering the meaning of the concept of kidnapping as well as some of the previous attempts to develop a typology of kidnapping in Nigeria and their inadequacies, and hence unveil the proposed strategic framework of understanding in this consideration.

The Concept of Kidnapping in Nigeria

Kidnap can be deconstructed into two words: kid (child) and nap (seize) (O'Brien, 2008: 13). This literally suggests that kidnapping is an act of seizing children. This reflects a traditional understanding of kidnapping in many societies, including some parts of Nigeria, where adults are considered to be relatively immune against abduction and forceful disappearance, perhaps except in wartime. In this case, children are considered to be soft targets of kidnapping, given their limited capacity to resist captors. This may explain the reason why Yoruba people in South West Nigeria refer to kidnapper/s as *gbomo gbomo*, which translates to mean child snatcher/s. In a modern and broader understanding of the concept, victimhood of kidnapping has become indiscriminate of age, as adulthood no longer translates to immunity from captors.

Kidnapping has been used interchangeably with abduction, forceful disappearance or seizure, and hostage taking in extant laws, literature and data projects. For instance, kidnapping is used as a form of hostage taking in the Global Terrorism Database (GTD, 1970–2019), while the other form is considered a barricade. However, International Maritime Bureau (IMB, 2001–2021) uses hostage taking as on-spot seizure of the victim and kidnapping as off-spot movement of the victim. Most scholars have emphasised the movement of the victim off the point of capture as a defining feature of kidnapping, when compared with hostage seizure (Clancy, 2005; Concannon, 2013; Jenkins, 1976; McGovern, 2010; Newton, 2002; Oriola, 2016; Osumah and Aghedo, 2011; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021; Wright, 2009). Whatever the name is called (abduction, kidnapping or hostage taking) and variation in the design and implementation of the tactic, these acts are considered as criminal means to different ends.

The Nigerian legal system and international law criminalised kidnapping and hostage taking. This is evident in Section 364 of the Criminal Code Act (1990) and Section 11 of Terrorism Prevention Act (2011) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Criminal Code Act describes abduction or kidnapping as a crime that involves unlawful seizures, detention and deprivation of personal liberty of a person against his/her will (FRN, 1990). Section 364 of Nigeria's Criminal Code Act provides a description of what constitutes kidnapping and prescribe penalty for it as follow:

any person who unlawfully imprisons any person, and takes him out of Nigeria without his consent; or unlawfully imprisons any person within Nigeria in such a manner as to prevent him from applying to court for his release or from discovering to any person the place where he is imprisoned, or in such a manner as to prevent any person entitled to have access to him from discovering the place where he is imprisoned; is guilty of a felony, and is liable to imprisonment for 10 years. (FRN, 1990)

It is evident from the foregoing conception of kidnapping in Nigeria's Criminal Code Act that the law is only concerned about the means and not the ends. The law is too silent on the motivation for kidnapping, which tends toward a consideration of the act as a means with indifferent ends. This Act is too simplistic to consider kidnapping as un-strategic, aimless and merely criminal act. However, with the rise of terrorism in Nigeria, especially in the last two decades, the conception and criminalisation of kidnapping and hostage taking have paid more attention to the strategic use of these means to achieve an end. Although the Nigerian Terrorism (Prevention) Act of 2011 criminalised kidnapping in Section 1 subsection C (ii), it does not explain what it means. In contrast, the Section 11 (1) of the Nigerian Terrorism (Prevention) Act of 2011 described hostage taking, criminalised it and spelled out punishment for this purpose as follows:

A person who knowingly— (a) seizes, detains or attempts to seize or detain; or (b) threatens to kill, injure or continue to detain another person in order to compel a third party to do, abstain from doing any act or gives an explicit or implicit condition for the release of the hostage, commits an offence under this Act and shall on conviction be liable to imprisonment for a maximum term of 10 years. (FRN, 2011)

The Terrorism Act recognised some of the frameworks of ends and means as they involve kidnapping and hostage taking in terrorism. However, the initiative is not in any way unique or encompassing for the country. First, the conception mirrors the description of hostage taking in the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) on 17 December 1979. Second, it does not effectively cover the strategic use of kidnapping or hostage taking outside of terrorism, especially in the country. With reference to the situation in Nigeria, this chapter agrees with Oyewole and Onuoha (2021) that kidnapping is a situation or phenomenon that happens or occurs when a person is grabbed, captured or seized, forcefully taken away and illegally confined, detained or incarcerated against his or her freely given consent by another person or organisation, with the aim of using the victim (hostage) as a means or an object of bargaining with a target (which can be an individual, organisation or deity/god) for political and/or socioeconomic benefits. The rest of this chapter will shed more light on the details of this conception of kidnapping.

Existing Frameworks of Understanding Kidnapping in Nigeria

There is a growing body of literature on kidnapping in Nigeria. As mentioned earlier, however, only a few of them provide a framework for understanding variants of kidnapping in the country. Research on kidnapping started in Nigeria in the fringe area of historical, criminal, security and political enquiries with a primary focus on one or few interconnected incidents. For instance, Okolo (1987) investigates the kidnapping sponsored by the Nigerian government in the United Kingdom as a form of state terrorism and its diplomatic implications. As shown elsewhere in this

volume, slave raid and trade, human trafficking, ritual-motivated arrest and abduction are enduring dimensions of kidnapping that can be traced to precolonial societies. In addition to these, there are growing trends of oil, Islamist and kleptomaniac kidnapping in Nigeria. Accordingly, the overriding need to differentiate forms of kidnapping in Nigeria cannot be overlooked, given the growing variation in patterns, objectives and actors that are involved across the country.

In his study on Niger Delta, Oriola (2016) observed that kidnappings can be said to be a repertoire of protest and public goods when they are popular among local population, and sheer criminality when they are unpopular. Amidst its judgemental tendency, this typology is largely based on mono-logical conception of popularity that is indifferent to the complexity of organisational, operational, tactical and strategic determinisms in kidnapping. With a focus on the strategic ends of the kidnappers in assessing their popularity, Oriola's (2016) study provides an inadequate basis to understand the complexity of actors that are de-popularised by tactics and not by their strategic ends. Besides, his study treated unpopular kidnapping as sheer criminality, as if it is an undifferentiated pattern of kidnapping with homogenous strategic and tactical ends.

Osumah and Aghedo (2011) identified three forms of kidnapping in Nigeria: ritual-oriented, politically motivated and business-related. Victims of ritual-oriented type are usually killed and dissected, with vital human organs such as private parts and armpit hair removed, ostensibly for sacrifice and money-making rituals. The politically motivated type focuses on political actors (desperate politicians) who place a high premium on power and employ any means to acquire power for self-regarding gains. Business-oriented type involves sponsorship and fraternising with kidnap gangs for protection and fortification of business interests and trademarks and to curtail stiff competition from business rivals (Osumah and Aghedo, 2011). However, the conception of business-oriented kidnapping is empirically unpopular in Nigeria, and the politically motivated type overlooked the utility of this tactic in protest. Aghedo (2015) subsequently identified kidnapping by rebel groups as a sub-category of politically motivated type and lumped business-oriented with economic or ransom-motivated kidnapping. Even at this, the typology is inadequate to understand the dynamics of kidnapping in Nigeria, especially in the last two decades. It ignored the place of many actors and their unique kidnapping strategies.

Strategic Framework for Understanding Kidnapping in Nigeria

Strategy is the organisation and utilisation of relevant capabilities in order to achieve the political objectives of a given actor (Akinrinde et al., 2023). For the purpose of this chapter, strategic framework categorises kidnapping in Nigeria based on the variation in the characters of the actors, their strategic and tactical goals, and manners of their articulation and communication for political purposes. With reference to their strategic branding, we recognised prominent actors that are involved in

kidnapping in Nigeria, such as bandits, baby factories, fraudsters (419), politicians, ritualists, pirates, militants, terrorists and insurgents. In contrast to the positions of Oriola (2016) and Osumah and Aghedo (2011), we assume that every form of kidnapping in Nigeria has specific or general political motivations or undertone that should be understood in any classification attempt. Considering the variation in the political objectives, their articulation and linkage to tactic and operation through strategic communication, kidnapping in Nigeria can be broadly divided into insurgent and non-insurgent kidnappings. Table 2.1 and the subsequent subsections in this chapter provide details on these.

It is important to note that this framework of understanding kidnapping is not static or cast in stone, but sensitive to the strategic dynamics of actors under

Table 2.1 Typology of kidnapping in Nigeria

Category	Names of actor	Political demand	Ultimate goals	Immediate goals	Geographical concentration
Insurgent kidnapping	Militants, terrorists, guerrillas and insurgents	Specific: Clearly articulated ends, constructed from societal grievances and linked to tactic and operations through strategic communication	Strategic (long term): Change in policy, regime and state structure and/or its ideological orientation	Tactical and operational capabilities and organisational capacity building (medium and short terms)	Niger Delta region and Northern Nigeria with extension into Lake Chad region
Non-insurgent kidnapping	Politicians, political parties, cabals and thugs	Not always clear but articulated ends, constructed personal interests, clandestinely link to tactics through strategic communication	Power and influence	Influence outcome of political events, such as elections, appointments and policy	Nationwide
	Bandits	General: Disarticulated ends, focused on personal gains, unconstructive reflection of societal demands/grievances that are linked to tactic with little or no strategic communication	Wealth	Ransom	Nationwide
	Sea pirates and robbers				Coaster Nigeria and Gulf of Guinea
	Fraudsters				Nationwide
	Baby factories			Baby	Southern Nigeria
	Human traffickers			Labour	Nationwide and transnational
	Ritualists		Wealth, power, protection and fame	Ritual	Nationwide

Source: Developed by the authors

consideration. Accordingly, it is possible for a group to multitask at the same time, or pursue and achieve transition from one category of kidnapping to another over time. A group of political thugs during election can resort to banditry, piracy, militancy and terrorism thereafter, and vice versa. A group that is involved in insurgency or guerrilla warfare can degenerate, embrace and collaborate with organisations using strategies of terrorism, banditry and piracy. Political thugs can equally be involved in kidnapping for rituals, when they satisfy the interests of their political benefactors. Fraudsters can also be involved in baby factories and ritual-related kidnappings, and vice versa. However, for a group to achieve transition from non-insurgent to insurgent kidnapping requires a significant transformation of its organisational capacity for articulated political agenda that reflects popular societal grievances and demands, and strategic communication for associated public mobilisation (cf. Norwitz, 2009; Oyewole, 2015a; Oyewole and Omotola, 2022a).

1. Insurgent Kidnapping

Insurgent kidnapping is considered as one of the tactics of engagement employed in an organised rebel campaign with coherent political demands constructed from well-articulated grievances. This form of kidnapping is an act of resistance with long, medium- and short-term objectives that can be sociopolitically and economically motivated. The ultimate or strategic objective of resistance is mostly to protest, challenge and change the status quo in public policy, regime, state structure or its ideological orientation. However, resistant movements always have immediate or tactical, operational and organisational objectives that may or may not fit into their political ends (Oyewole, 2015a). These may include the need to fund the campaigns, recruit and equip fighters and other people who provide them with support services, reward members and sponsors, among others. Nevertheless, the gaps in political, organisation and tactical ends are often bridged through insurgent strategic communication. In Nigeria, this form of kidnapping is concentrated in the conflict theatres, the Niger Delta and Northern regions.

I. Oil-Related Kidnapping in the Niger Delta Region

Hostage taking (barricade) has been a feature of Niger Delta crisis since the 1980s. In this case, oil-producing communities and their civil society groups mostly barricade oil companies and staffs as well as government offices and officials amidst riots and uprisings to secure socioeconomic concessions. As state responses become militarised against hostage taking by barricade amidst uprising in the late 1990s, however, militarised-resistant groups with tactics like kidnapping have emerged in the region (LaMonica and Omotola, 2014; Obi and Rustad, 2011; Oyewole et al., 2018; Oriola, 2016). Prominent among these militant movements are Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Coalition of Militant Action (COMA), the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger Delta Resistance Movement (NDRM), the Liberation Movement of the Urhobo People (LIMUP), the Niger Delta Militant Force Squad (NDMFS) and the Niger Delta Liberation Front (NDLF). It is important to note that the

operational capabilities of some of these militant groups have been covertly or overtly displayed beyond the Niger Delta, and extend deep into the Gulf of Guinea.

The most sought out target of insurgent kidnapping in the Niger Delta is the oil workers, which are considered to be significant to environmental crisis in the region (Ibaba, 2008; Ehwareme, 2009; Danjibo and Nwiline, 2009). On 11 January 2006, for instance, 19 oil workers, which include American, British, Bulgarian and Honduran nationals, were abducted by MEND. The NDPVF abducted four expatriates (British, Dutch, French and Pakistan nationals) in June 2007, MEND abducted three Indians working for a petrochemical company on 01 June, 2007, and the Lactop Marine Force also abducted 28 oil workers in Cross Rivers State in August 2012 (Oyewole, 2016a). Public officials and their relatives, and the security operatives are also targeted for kidnapping by militants in the Niger Delta on the basis that they are responsible for political corruption and underdevelopment, and human rights abuses in the region (Aghedo, 2015; Tamuno, 2011). For instance, the former deputy governor of Anambra State, Chudi Nwike was abducted by members of the LIMUP on 19 March 2013, in Edo State (Oyewole, 2018). The MEND also abducted the sister of President Goodluck Jonathan's aide, Mrs. Augusta Douglas-Ayam in October 2013. Equally, militants suspected to be members of EBA also abducted four police officers in Bayelsa State on 04 November 1999 (Oyewole, 2016b).

In their resistance against state-oil alliance, the Niger Delta militants have utilised kidnapping among other tactics to attract local and global attention to environmental degradation, political corruption, poverty, unemployment, inequality and underdevelopment, militarised campaigns to protect oil against the host communities in the region (Aghedo, 2015; Akpan, 2010; Danjibo and Nwiline, 2009; Ehwareme, 2009; Ibaba, 2008; Oriola, 2016). Nevertheless, the same measure has been used to fund militant campaigns, procure weapons and enrich militant members, leaders and sponsors. Ransom is therefore a component feature of kidnapping in militant campaigns in the Niger Delta. For instance, MEND received N100 million (US\$ 770,000) as ransom in exchange for 19 hostages in January 2006, and N40 million (US\$ 339,703) as a ransom for eight hostages in June 2007 (Oyewole, 2015b, 2016b). Although there are cases where hostages were killed by captures or rescued by security forces, ransom is the primary determinant of the fate of hostages in the Niger Delta, making it to appear as if all that the militants in the region care about is the immediate benefit (ransom). However, ransom constitutes and contributes to the short- and medium-term objectives of the militants, to build organisation capacity and operational capabilities, which are required for their strategic ends.

II. Islamist Kidnapping in Northern Nigeria and the Lake Chad region

Kidnapping has also become a conflict tactic that is employed by a growing number of militant Islamist movements in northern Nigeria, especially since 2011 (Oyewole, 2015b). Different factions of Boko Haram and allies are central to this form of kidnapping in northern Nigeria. Although studies have shown that there are several factions of Boko Haram, there are two popular brands of the movement that are significant in this consideration (Onuoha, 2016). Boko Haram was officially named *Jama'atu Ahlis Suna Lidda'awati Wal Jihad* (People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad), and renamed *Wilāyat al-Islāmiyya*

Gharb Afrīqiyyah (Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP)) in March 2015. Although the movement was divided, following the August 2016s appointment of Abu-Musab Al-Barnawi as the head of ISWAP in place of Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram's leader since 2009, it does not really produce different brand name. However, pro-Al Qaida forces in Boko Haram formed Ansaru also known as *Jama'atu Ansarul Musilimina fi Biladin Sudan* (Defender of Islam in the Land of Black Africa) in January 2012 (Oriola et al., 2021; Onuoha, 2016). Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is another major player in this theatre. The operational reach of this network extends beyond northern Nigeria across West, Central and North Africa.

As an indicator of their global Islamist allegiance and interests, Boko Haram and its allies have abducted foreigners across the Lake Chad region. Ansaru abducted Briton Chris McManus and Italian Franco Lamolinara in Kebbi State on 05 December 2011; a Frenchman Francis Collomp in January 2013; and seven expatriates (British, Greek, Italian and Lebanese nationals) in Bauchi State in February 2013. AQIM abducted Edgar Raupach, a German national, in Kano on 26 January 2012. Moreover, Boko Haram kidnapped seven French tourists on 19 February 2013 and ten Chinese expatriates in 2014 from far northern Cameroon and brought them to Nigeria (Oyewole, 2016b; Zenn, 2014). Despite a record of kidnapping wealthy entrepreneurs with politicians and their relatives (including the wife of the Cameroonian deputy prime minister), Boko Haram targets more helpless civilians across the Lake Chad region. In this manner, Boko Haram have kidnapped tens of thousands of people, including 276 Chibok schoolgirls (14–15 March 2014), 218 Katarko villagers (January 2015), over 500 Damasak residents (2014) and 200 Mubi's residents (29 October 2014) and 105 Dapchi schoolgirls (19 February 2018).

Kidnaping of schoolgirls gave Boko Haram the opportunity to communicate its displeasure for girl's education and gender equality, as well as Western education and influence in Muslim dominated region of Nigeria and the Lake Chad region (Okolie-Osemene and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Oyewole, 2016a; Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021; Zenn, 2018; Zenn and Pearson, 2014). This development fits into decades of tensely debated subject of Islamisation of the state and education in northern Nigeria. Using kidnapping as a tactic, Boko Haram also believes that it has a duty to persuade or co-opt Muslims to join and support the holy war and convert Christians to Islam. This strategic communication is relevant to Boko Haram's kidnapping and use of hostages to develop its organisational and operational capacities. In this way, the insurgents have abducted thousands of Christians and made conversion to Islam and marriage to their commanders the conditions for regaining freedom. Several young girls and women have been abducted to serve the insurgents as wives, sex slaves, and personnel to gather intelligence and lure security operatives into trap, health workers and perform domestic chores such as cooking and cleaning in their camps (Amusan et al., 2019; Habila, 2017; Oyewole, 2016b). Moreover, young boys and men have been abducted and conscripted into insurgent fighting force or support staffs for procurement, transportation, media and intelligence, among others.

Kidnapping for ransom is also one of the major sources of funding for Boko Haram's campaign of terror. On 19 April 2013, Boko Haram released seven French

tourists abducted in Northern Cameroon and brought to Nigeria on 19 February 2013, in exchange for US\$3.15 million ransom and prisoner swap. Another 27 Cameroonian hostages, including the Kolofata chief, cleric and mayor, the wife of the deputy prime minister Amadou Ali and 10 Chinese expatriates were released in exchange for US\$600,000 ransom and 30 Boko Haram prisoners in October 2014. Also, some Nigerian government officials and their relatives were reportedly abducted in exchange for ransoms of between US\$10,000 and US\$300,000 in 2013 (Zenn, 2014; Oyewole, 2016b). Equally, Boko Haram released 82 Chibok schoolgirls in May 2017 in exchange for two million euros in ransom and five insurgent commanders, and 14 Dapchi schoolgirls and another boy were released on 21 March 2018, in exchange for five million euros in ransom and prisoner swap (Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021). While these and many other cases of kidnapping in this conflict theatre are branded by the insurgents in Islamist strategic communication, the hostage handling behaviours and the resultant fate of hostages have also reflected the operational, tactical and organisational dynamics of the captors (Oyewole, 2015a).

2. Non-Insurgent Kidnapping

Non-insurgent kidnapping involves actors with indefinite, incoherent and unpronounced public interests and/or operate outside a sustained armed campaign. All forms of kidnapping are used to communicate societal grievances, making it considerable to argue that they are all politically motivated and relevant in protest. However, articulation, construction and communication of protest agenda vary between insurgent and non-insurgent kidnapping. The latter lack coherent political ends, protest agenda and strategic coordination. Non-insurgent kidnapping features many actors, which can be broadly categorised into two. The first among them are politicians, with political cabals and thugs, who kidnap for power and influence. The political agenda of this form of kidnapping is not always clear to observers at least in the immediate term but it is articulated, constructed from self-centred or personal interests (unlike societal interests in the insurgency) and are clandestinely linked to tactic (kidnapping) through strategic communication to a specifically targeted audience. The second category of actors are bandits, fraudsters, pirates, baby factories and ritualists. These are actors with general and disarticulated political agendas, and priority for personal interests that unconstructively reflect the grievances of the society and state inadequacies, which are link to kidnapping with little or no strategic communication.

1. Kidnaping for Power and Influence: Politicians, Political Parties, Cabals and Thugs

Politically motivated kidnapping is an instrument employed by politicians to gain or maintain power, and by political cabals or interested parties to influence public officials and policy direction. Osumah and Aghedo (2011) described politically motivated kidnapping as a function of the neo-patrimonial character of the African states, which makes political actors place a high premium on power and employ any means to acquire power for self-regarding gains. Politically motivated kidnapping relies on abundance of uneducated or school-dropout, underemployed or unemployed, unsecure, drug-addicted and frustrated youths that are driven

to the underworld of cultism, gangsterism, touts and area boys, and are readily available for mobilisation by desperate politicians. A prominent example is the abduction of a sitting Governor of Anambra state, Chris Ngige by agents deployed by his former political benefactor on 10 July 2003.

Kidnapping or its threat against opponents and their supporters, electoral officials are common instruments to influence outcome of elections in Nigeria (Hamalai et al., 2017; Omilusi, 2017; Omotola, 2021a; Oyewole and Omotola, 2022b). Amidst the pre-election crisis in Rivers State, the Chairman of the People Democratic Party (PDP) Port Harcourt chapter Hon Chinyere Igwe was kidnapped along with two others in February 2014 (Vanguard, 2014). The chieftaincies of the All Progressive Party (APC) were also kidnapped in the run-up to the gubernatorial election in Ekiti State in 2014 and the 2015 Presidential election in Edo State. More alarming, there was a threat or attempt to kidnap Professor Attahiru Jega, the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (2010–2015), by some of the loyalists of President Goodluck Jonathan (2010–2015), at the point of Presidential Election's result collation on 31 March 2015, when it became evident that the then sitting President was about to lose power to the opposition candidate (an unprecedented event in the democratic history of the country) (Adeniyi, 2017). No fewer than 72 election-related cases of kidnapping were recorded during periods of Nigeria's general elections of 2019 (ACLED, 1997–2019; Oyewole and Omotola, 2022b).

Kidnapping of relatives of public office holders can also be described as politically motivated, when the aim is to influence policy direction, even though it can also have economic undertone. On 09 December 2012, for instance, armed men abducted Professor Kamene Okonjo, the mother of Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the Minister of Finance and the Coordinating Minister of Nigeria (2011–2015). Before the kidnappers switched their demand to ransom, their initial demand was for Okonjo-Iweala to resign his position with the Federal Government of Nigeria and leave the country for the United States where she resides with immediate effect. Another condition for the release of the hostage was for the Ministry of Finance to pay subsidy dues to oil firms under investigation for subsidy scam (Okonjo-Iweala, 2018). However, the hostage was released for ransom (N13 million was paid instead of the initial demand for N1 billion) and due to the pressure from the security operatives in combing the forest and arresting some of those connected to the kidnapping (Oyewole, 2016b). A similar pattern can be observed with the case of Chief Inengite Nitabai, the then President Jonathan's cousin, who was abducted on 28 February 2014.

II. Kidnapping for Wealth and Co.: Bandits, Baby Factories, Fraudsters, Pirates and Ritualists

There is a growing trend of kidnapping for wealth among other things by bandits, baby factories, fraudsters, pirates and ritualists in Nigeria. Although wealth is the central objective of kidnappers in this category, they also have their unique motivations, such as baby, security, success, fame and revenge among others. Dominantly, this category of kidnapping reflects little or no political agenda that is strategically communicated or linked to actor's operation and tactic, and rarely seeks political

mobilisation. However, there are cases of some actors in this category that have pursued transition course to become insurgent category. Some other actors have displayed selective and often rare and limited political demand, which mostly revolves around their personal or group security, especially when they are confronted by security forces.

I. Kidnapping by Bandits

Bandits broadly cover armed robbers, brigands, cultists, gangs, armed pastoralists, syndicate and other related groups. As detailed elsewhere in this volume, kidnapping by bandits for ransom can be found across Nigeria. While most bandits do not have popular identifiable gang name, some prominent figures have cut public attention. Yet, there are terrifying names of notorious kidnap kingpins, such as Evans and Vampire in the South, and Hamisu Hassan in the North. Evans is the alias for a largely unknown Chukwudi Onuamadike, a kingpin of an armed robbery gang that police reportedly neutralised in 2006 and switched carrier to kidnapping in 2008. His gang carried out many high-profile cases of kidnapping in Lagos, and infamously fixed unnegotiable ransom at US\$one million in most cases. In 2015 alone, Evan's gang received ransom of US\$one million each in exchange for Chief Raymond Okoye, Uche Okoroafor, James Uduji and Elias Ukachukwu (Premium Times, 2017). The multimillionaire kidnap-for-ransom kingpin, Henry Chibueze aka vampire is equally notorious in eastern Nigeria (Okolie, 2017). Many bandit kidnappers have also emerged across Northern Nigeria recently (ICG, 2020).

Bandits are generally more motivated by personal than public interests. Their immediate and ultimate goal in kidnapping is to exchange hostages for ransom and make wealth, respectively. Unlike insurgent kidnapping, the bandits usually lack strategic communication and public mobilisation for well-articulated political agenda that are clearly constructed to reflect societal grievances. However, some groups have attempted notable transitions from criminal banditry to social banditry and, in some cases, terrorism, militancy and insurgency. For instance, in 2013, a notorious kidnap kingpin in Delta State, Kelvin Ibruvwe established LIMUP and mobilised his Urhobo community through strategic communication in an attempt to transform its bandit gang into militant group (Oyewole, 2018). With alarming records of kidnapping amidst pastoral crisis, cattle rustling, armed robbery, looting and gold exploitation in the Northern region of Nigeria, many criminal bandit groups are equally becoming increasingly social with limited political agenda and communication (Kuna and Ibrahim, 2015; Ojo, 2020; Ojo et al., 2023; Omotola, 2021b).

II. Kidnapping by Maritime Robbers and Pirates

Many insurgents in the Niger Delta have degenerated, embraced or resorted to sea robbery and piracy in Nigeria and beyond (Onuoha, 2012; Obi and Rustad, 2011; Tamuno, 2011). These are joined by criminal bandit groups from coaster region of the country that have extended their operation from the land to adjourning water and the Gulf of Guinea (GoG). Some of these armed groups also double as criminal instrument in kidnapping among other violent strategies for politicians

during elections in the country (Carnimeo and Oyewole, 2020; Oyewole, 2023; Omotola, 2009). About 50 percent of pirate attacks in the GoG between 2000 and 2014 occurred in Nigeria's waters, and Nigerian-based pirate groups have expanded their attacks deep offshore into the GOG as well as off the coast of Benin, Cameroon and Togo and beyond (Oyewole, 2015c). About 140 incidents of kidnapping by sea pirates and armed robbers in the GOG were reported between 2000 and 2014 (MPELD, 2015). At least, 929 hostages were reportedly taken offshore in Nigeria and the GoG between 2007 and 2016 (IMB, 2001–2021). In 2020, Nigeria accounted for 46 percent of cases of kidnapping by pirates globally (IMB, 2021).

A report by Ocean Beyond Piracy (OBP, 2014) estimated that 1871 seafarers were exposed to pirate attacks in the GoG in 2013, of which the vessels of 1209 of them were boarded, and 279 seafarers were taken as hostage. Moreover, 73 of the hostages were taken away and held onshore for average duration of 22 days, 22 seafarers were taken hostage while pirates used their vessels as mother ship for average duration of 17 days, while another 184 seafarers were held hostage in the course of oil siphoning/extended robbery for the average duration of 4 days. Against this background, the average cost of kidnapping and ransom by sea pirates and robbers in the GOG was estimated to be US\$1.53 million in 2013 (OBP, 2014). Accordingly, the immediate and ultimate objectives of kidnapping by sea pirates and robbers in Nigeria are ransom and wealth, respectively. However, there are cases where hostages are used as human shields to escape naval pursuit. Again, ransom wealth generated by pirates are sometimes traced to politicians and their selfish electoral campaigns, and militant campaigns (Oyewole, 2015c).

III. Kidnapping by Fraudsters

While kidnapping by bandits involved armed groups that employ force, fraudsters mainly utilise deception. Otu (2013) viewed kidnapping as a variant of advance-free fraud in Nigeria. Advance-free fraud evolved in Africa in the 1990s. It can take the form of a dubious electronic message sent to targeted victims mostly foreigners by those pretending to be sons and daughters of rich African political leaders who want to launder national funds to a bank account abroad, with an offer to reward any person that is prepared to assist with a sizeable percentage as a commission. The fraudsters can also pretend to be senior government officials or captains of industry who want to auction critical national or business assets. In the final analysis, however, Otu (2013) lumped kidnapping by Niger Delta militants among other strategic actors in this category. In contrast, kidnapping by fraudsters has become a unique security concern in Nigeria. There is an alarming rate of missing persons that are linked to scammed job adverts and associated invitation for interview, and scammed online date and related invitations, in Nigeria. In some cases, ritualists have also employed these methods to lure victims into their traps.

Kidnapping by fraudsters also includes self-sponsored kidnapping to raise funds from targeted audiences: family, co-workers or government. In July 2018, a 45-year-old Mrs. Hadijat Kabir and a 19-year-old Dorcas Adilewa staged their own kidnapping in Lagos and demanded for N15 million and N600,000 as ransom, respectively, while Ufom Edet Udoh staged his own kidnapping and demanded for N60 million

as ransom from relatives in July 2017 (Onyegbula and Ajiromanus, 2018; Sunday, 2018; Punch, 2017). The alleged kidnapping of Ebikeme Clark by militants and the payment of N500 million ransom by the Delta State government in April 2014 was also described by MEND as stage managed (Odiegwu, 2014). The last case shows that politicians can also scam the public with staged kidnapping and pay ransom as a corrupt way for personal enrichment. However, cases, individuals and groups in this category of kidnapping are mostly motivated by desire for wealth, and their strategies dominantly lack a clearly articulated political agenda, as well as relevant public communication and mobilisation.

IV. Kidnapping by Human Traffickers

Kidnapping by human traffickers have emerged as a modern version of slave trade that destroyed the sociopolitical fabric of many precolonial African societies. Human trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer and harbouring of a person, by means of threat, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or position of vulnerability, giving or receiving of payments and other benefits, to achieve the consent to control over the person for the purpose of exploitation (UN, 2009). As shown elsewhere in this volume, kidnapping has become one of the major means to secure victims of human trafficking in Nigeria. There are two dimensions to kidnapping for trafficking in Nigeria, that is, national and transnational. At the national level, many people are kidnapped from the rural areas are moved into the cities, from one part of a large city to another, or from one city/state to another. Accordingly, prominent destinations for victims of kidnapping by human traffickers are Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Ibadan, Kaduna, Aba, Onitsha, Benin, Port Harcourt and Jos among other major cities across the country. However, some of the victims are moved out of the country within and beyond West Africa. Most other destinations for victims are Europe, North America, North Africa, Middle East and East Asia.

The immediate and ultimate objectives of perpetrators of kidnapping for human trafficking is cheap labour from victims that will translate to wealth for them. Instead of recruiting victims with costly promises, payments and other benefits, kidnapping tends to offer perpetrators more rewarding means to carry out their incriminating enterprises. Accordingly, most victims of human trafficking are sold into forced and in most cases indecent labour, as sex slaves, prostitutes, disposable wives in unwanted marriages, domestic servants, as well as workers in farms, illegal mining, factories and other incriminating production and distribution facilities. As this chapter shows later, baby factory is one of such facilities that are linked to kidnapping by traffickers. It is important to note that bandit, terrorist and insurgent groups can also be involved in this form of kidnapping. For instance, Boko Haram has been accused of using both kidnapping and human trafficking in its strategies of terrorism and insurgency (Oriola et al., 2021; Parkinson and Hinshaw, 2021). However, kidnapping by human traffickers are generally motivated by selfish personal or group and not public interests, as the actors (except when it involves insurgent group) lack any form of political agenda, communication and mobilisation.

V. Kidnapping by Baby Factories

Kidnapping by baby factory is an emerging phenomenon in Nigeria, with most concentration in the southern part of the country. Onuoha (2014) described a baby farm or factory as any accommodation where mostly underage pregnant girls are kept with or without their consent, or where young girls are encouraged or forced to become pregnant, for the purpose of giving birth to babies that are sold to diverse clients. Amidst these, some of the victims who are mostly young girls are kidnapped, raped and impregnated by baby factory agents, in this case, young boys that are sometimes recruited through kidnapping, and held hostage until they deliver babies for their captors to sell. Some of the victims of baby factories are kidnapped and trafficked with forceful means in bandit style or lured into captivity by deceptive means in fraudsters-like styles.

Some of the baby factories were disguised as orphanage centres, clinics, offices and places of worship, while others maintained their facilities clandestinely. While 17 pregnant girls and 11 babies were rescued in Imo State in 2013, 160 children were rescued from a baby factory and unregistered orphanage centres in Lagos in April 2018 (BBC, 2018). Another 16 pregnant girls were rescued from a baby factory in Port Harcourt in September 2018 (Iheamnachor, 2018). Evidence from arrested suspects shows that babies produced in this process sold for between N20,000 and N500,000 depending on victim's gender, client, factory and location. As such, the immediate and ultimate objectives of baby factories are dominantly babies that are meant to be sold to enrich the perpetrators. However, the buyers may be families without a child, or ritualists that need a baby or body part for ritual-based wealth, fame and power. Generally, therefore, kidnapping by baby factories lack a direct link to political agenda based on societal grievances and demands that are strategically communicated with the hope of public mobilisation.

VI. Kidnapping by Ritualists

Kidnapping for ritual is the oldest and least reported in Nigeria. This phenomenon can be traced to some precolonial African societies, including Nigeria. Anyone that is familiar with Nollywood, Nigerian home videos, will have come across the subject of ritual killing and kidnapping for that purpose. Ritual sacrifice is a "faith strategy" that involves the use of whole or severed parts of a human being, such as the head, genitals, breasts, eyes, intestine, arms and legs as well as exhumed dead body or its severed parts as objects of sacrifice to acquire money, wealth, success, fame, favour, greatness, power and protection from dangers (Oyewole, 2016c). Most of the victims of ritual killing in Nigeria are sourced through kidnapping, and there is no age bracket, secluded sex, status or geo-political limits in target selection. As shown elsewhere in this volume, perpetrators of this crime can be individuals or criminal enterprising groups.

Ritual kidnapping is often associated with traditionalist dens that can be found mostly in forests, and in some cases slums, places of worships and abandoned facilities. The horror that was found in Soka, a ritualist den uncovered in Ibadan in 2014 has become the epitome of the phenomenon in Nigeria. Around the same time,

another den was found with a heap of over 20 human skulls, skeletons and decomposing bodies along Kilometre 15 on the Aba/Azumini Highway, Abia State (The Sun, 2014). In 2012, a survival, a 13-year-old Emmanuela that was found 4 days after she was declared missing, narrated how she boarded a kidnapper's bus along with other 10 passengers at 7 pm in Igbagbo, Lagos, how they were hypnotised and made unconscious as their captors drove them into a forest, and she watched other hostages killed for ritual before her miraculous rescue (Balogun, 2012). It is important to note that many politicians, religious leaders and wealthy business magnets are suspected to be involved in ritual kidnapping and killing. However, this act is publicly disconnected from political agenda, which is based on societal grievances and demands that are strategically communicated for public mobilisation.

Conclusion

This chapter acknowledges that the subject of kidnapping in Nigeria has received growing research attention. In this process, extant literatures that are considerably reviewed here have identified different dimensions, motivations and forms of kidnapping in the country. Nevertheless, most studies on the subject matter are characterised by limited thematic and geographical focuses, which have left the study area with inexhaustive or less comprehensive classification, as well as weak basis for comparison and generalisation at the national level. In this manner, kidnapping is often treated erroneously as a homogenous strategy in Nigeria, instead of one means that leads to multiple ends. This tendency is considered to be dangerous for research recommendations, public reactions and advocacies, as well as policy and state security responses, as there is no one-size-fits-all solution to all the variants of kidnapping in Nigeria.

After a review of the few existing attempts to develop a typology of kidnapping in Nigeria, this chapter proposes a strategic framework for understanding the subject. The framework is based on variation in the organisation of the actors that are involved in kidnapping in Nigeria, their (immediate, medium and ultimate) objectives, capacity to articulate political agenda, reflection of societal grievances, mobilisation through strategic communication and terrain of operations. In the final analysis, this chapter broadly classifies kidnapping in Nigeria into insurgent (with terrorists, militants and guerrillas as actors) and non-insurgent (involving politicians, political parties and thugs, armed bandits, maritime pirates, baby factories, fraudsters and ritualists). This framework of understanding kidnapping in Nigeria has the potential to support relevant decisions of victims and their relatives, CSO, media, government and the state security forces.

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Chapter 3

History of Kidnapping in Nigeria



Akachi Odoemene

Abstract Kidnapping is a historical phenomenon in many parts of Nigeria. Such sinister act can be traced from the remotest times of the pre-colonial periods to the contemporary times in the life of most Nigerian communities. While the pre-colonial period witnessed the use of kidnapping as a means of acquiring humans for certain needs of persons and people—for instance, for sacrifice and slaves—the colonial era saw the concerted efforts by colonialists towards the suppression and extinguishing of such ‘needs’, thus both human sacrifice and slavery/slave trade were outlawed. This situation forced human sacrifice and slave trade underground. In other words, while such acts diminished in public view and reckoning (at least to a reasonable extent), they simultaneously thrived clandestinely, keeping their occurrence away from public consciousness, and became more prevalent due to the individualism cultivated by colonialism. The very attempts by the colonialists to eradicate such societal vices—such as slavery and human sacrifice—may well have fed its continued prevalence, particularly clandestinely. Thus, with such colonial onslaught, communities and individuals sought supernatural protection from such colonial incursions. Such ‘supernatural protections’ may well have involved ritual abduction to waste human lives through sacrifices.

In contradistinction to what was observed in the pre-colonial and colonial stages, the later post-colonial stage witnessed an exponential increase in kidnapping activities due to a complete system breakdown—socially, economically, politically and morally. What then emerged was a new twist to the kidnap trend—for ransom (pecuniary gains), an element which was hitherto largely non-existent in the Nigerian society. With such dramatic changes in the fortunes of the country in

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respect of kidnapping, Nigeria became a world-acclaimed center for such burgeoning clandestine business. This situation was, however, to change further—for the worse—with the emergence of organized criminal groups and terrorists, such as *Boko Haram*, the bandits, and then the Fulani herdsmen. Together, these groups took the issue of kidnapping in Nigeria to another level, approach and height—such of which were never known in the country. Accordingly, this chapter explores the evolution of kidnapping in Nigeria, and its changing dynamics across space (from the North to the South, and the East to the West) and time (from pre-colonial era to post-colonial eras).

Introduction

Due to certain misconceptions or misapplication of terms noticed in a number of extant works, there is a need to begin this interrogative narrative and *expose* with some kind of clarification of the main concept and focus of the discourse here—kidnapping. This would certainly make for a proper understanding and appreciation of the essence of this chapter. Since the focus is on the Nigerian case, getting started with a definition of this term within its laws would suffice. Section 364, Chap. 77 of the Nigerian Criminal Code Act (1990) aptly defines kidnapping as the act that “unlawfully imprisons ...any person in such a manner as to prevent him [or her] from applying to a court for his [or her] release or from discovering to any other person the place where he [or she] is imprisoned, or in such a manner as to prevent any person entitled to have access to him [or her] from discovering the place where he [or she] is imprisoned.” In other words, kidnapping is deemed to have occurred “[W]hen a person, without lawful authority, physically transports or moves another person without that other person’s consent, with the intent to use the abduction in connection with some other *nefarious* objective” (Stimmel, Stimmel & Roeser, *n.d.*). Therefore, it is often a deliberate aggressive act initiated so as to satisfy the captors’ desire(s).

Before proceeding, one needs to note clearly two important points with respect to kidnapping. Firstly, human history—maybe since its earliest times—is replete with such unlawful forceful abduction, removal, and detention of persons by others. Therefore, in every human society, kidnapping has some interesting history that stretches back to sometime in the ancient past. Nigerian societies are certainly not left out in this historical dynamic of human development. As Graham (2011: 587) puts it: “Hostage-takings in ...West Africa are nothing new”; One then needs to add: what is new are the political undertones. Without a doubt—as we shall see later—such acts have occurred in the region in different epochs, for diverse reasons, taken various forms, with dissimilar meanings or connotations, and enthused varied consequences on diverse societies. Secondly, there exists a certain aspect of kidnapping that is devoid of any nefariousness and is socially acceptable in communities that practice such. This is what is popularly called “bride kidnap”—a practice where a man (supposed suitor) kidnapped and held hostage a maiden he wished to marry

(Bohannon and Bohannon, 1953). Using the maiden's condition to negotiate with her family for an eventual marriage arrangement (Makar, 1994), traditional rituals—gift giving, gun firing, and warning of other intending suitors to keep away—were performed after which the kidnapped lady became officially the wife of “the kidnapper.” This marriage tradition is ancient in Tiv culture (particularly among the Latuka) where it is known as *Yevise yem nom* or *Kwase u yevese amin* (consensual kidnapping), though it has almost been phased out over time (*OperaNews*, 2019; Fyanka, 2018). Due to the nature of this kidnapping tradition, it is beyond the scope of this study and would not be dealt with here.

For the purposes of our discourses in this chapter, the focus would be on the three historical, though largely un-natural epochs in Nigerian, nay African history—the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. We would be presenting and exploring evidences of kidnappings in traditional societies of what we know today as Nigeria, as well as examining the different connotations/implications of such acts in societies. It would be exigent to note that some of the different forms which the kidnapping trends have taken naturally transcended the different epochs, and thus have existed in multiple arenas, though might have presented themselves in different forms.

In the Pre-Colonial Era

Kidnapping, as a malevolent act, was very well known to most, if not all traditional societies in what eventually became Nigeria, as these indigenous societies had clear names and expressions for the act. The argument here is that whatever did not exist in any society would not have had a name or expression for it among its people. In pre-colonial times, kidnapping was essentially embarked upon for the acquisition of persons to be used for two primary deeds. The first reason was for human sacrifice—which was prevalent at the time and used for diverse reasons. The second primary reason for kidnapping was for enslavement—whether that of a child stolen by childless person(s) for keeps to himself/themselves, or an adult to be used as a slave by his/her captor(s). In this section, we will examine these two cases, as well as a third case, though a seemingly unpopular and non-felonious example of kidnapping in Nigerian societies.

Kidnapping for Human Sacrifice

Sacrifice is a universal religious phenomenon and act that involves the destruction of a victim for the purpose of maintaining or restoring the right relationship of man to the sacred order. Human sacrifice is the highest and the costliest religious ritual sacrifice that a community resorts to mostly in times of disaster or some dire conditions, to propitiate certain divinities and/or purify the community (Ayegboyin, 2009:

584). All over the world, and throughout history, wherever mankind has worshipped divine beings, one encounters the practice of sacrifice (Ringgren, 1962: 7). In fact, hardly can you find a culture throughout the world without a history of the practice of human sacrifice. Ajayi and Falade (n.d.) define human sacrifice as “the act of killing one or more human beings, usually as an offering to a deity, as part of a ritual.” Most times, it is done to appease the gods or deities or to fulfil a promise made. Throwing light on the significance of sacrifices and rituals in African societies, it has been argued that:

Sacrifices and offerings help to confirm the relationship between the Supreme Being, super-humanity, and humanity. Rituals take place during community celebrations and festivals for the purpose of thanksgiving, purification, and communion. Their performance helps to link humanity with super-humanity. Rituals are religiously meaningful acts that people perform in appropriate circumstances, usually following strictly prescribed patterns. Rituals are the concrete expression of belief. (Lugira, 2009: 74)

For these activities, human beings were mostly offered not out of lack of respect for human life, but rather because a personal philosophy of life maintains that it is better to sacrifice human life for the good of the community than for all to perish (Ibid.). Unlike the argument of Oyewole (2016a) to the contrary, human sacrifice was often undertaken as a community ritual. For instance, Ikenga-Metuh (1985: 22) notes that “in the substitutionary annual human sacrifice to cleanse the community, the community dies (in the victim) at the end of each year in order to have a more wholesome life in the New Year.” Furthermore, Basden (1938: 73) threw more light on this matter, arguing that ritual purifications were done for the community, and did take place annually—and/or at other times recommended by the diviner. Such periodic purification rituals and rites in some places, Ikenga-Metuh (1985) and Basden (1938) insisted, often required a human victim. Persons used for these human sacrifices were often procured through wars (which led to enslavement) and/or kidnapping (abduction, seizure, and detention), which was rife in the period (Aniche, 2015). These kidnap victims were eventually killed, in religious sacrificial ceremonies, or buried alive, for personal and/or community cleansing so as to mollify deities and/or ancestors in those communities.

In another context, certain burial rituals required human sacrifices. These were common among kings and other royal personages, army commanders and wealthy slave traders, certain exalted chiefs and community leaders, whose transition to the great beyond would require, in addition to food, clothing materials, and other “necessities” for the life beyond, the accompaniment of retinue of attendants, guides, and servants, who were buried with them—either alive or dead (Ajayi and Falade, n.d.). In these processes described above, virgins and children were often preferred due to beliefs of their purity and cleansing significance (Reader, 1999: 558). Thus, they became primary targets of kidnapping in most societies. This is the antecedent of what is now known as *gbómo gbómo* (child kidnapping) in south-western Nigeria (Oyewole, 2016a). The task of fetching the humans for such sacrifices or burials was often assigned to designated “headhunters” who could be from that community or hired from elsewhere for such purposes. These persons (headhunters), as soon as commissioned for the task, moved around communities in search of

unfortunate persons who would trail lonely parts or function in the nights and stray into their waiting traps.

Kidnapping for Enslavement

Unlike what the real situation is, there seems to be this feeling in scholarship that the significance of kidnapping to the overall international enslavement systems was one that was largely “unserious.” This position is, however, unsustainable. In this section, significant evidence will be presented to show that kidnapping, far from being an unimportant enslaving activity, was the main factor in this process, and “contributed substantially to the human commodity commerce” (Perry, 2009: 2). Indeed, (Equiano, 1789) agrees no less, noting thus: “I believe more are procured this way, and by kidnapping, than any other.” Innumerable acts of kidnapping were committed by diverse persons of African origin on their neighbors with whom they cohabited in the same locality. Perry (2009) argues that many of the abducted unfortunates—whether kidnapped, got from raids or wars—were sold into different slavery systems—the trans-Saharan, the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, and/or the trans-Atlantic slave trades, as well as “the ubiquitous internal networks for which there is a dearth of verifiable documentation” (Perry, 2009: 1).

While critical evaluations of two of these international trade systems would suffice in this section, it would be safe to note, of course, in agreement with Patterson (1982), that the distinction between raiding and kidnapping—common tactics used to capture slaves during these trade systems—appears to be, in a sense, arbitrary. In other words, any unilateral, violent action that generates prisoners, separating them by force, keeping them for some other ulterior motives, or selling them into a life of servitude qualifies as kidnapping in a broader sense, especially for our purposes here. Similarly, an apt illustration by Lovejoy (1983) would be instructive for a start in this sub-section, especially so as to clarify some notions in relation to enslavement. He argues that:

Slavery was virtually always initiated through violence that reduced the status of a person from a condition of freedom and citizenship to a condition of slavery. The most common type of violence has been warfare, in which prisoners were enslaved. Variations in the organization of such violence – including raids whose purpose was to acquire slaves, banditry, and kidnapping – indicate that violent enslavement can be thought of as falling on a continuum from large-scale political action...to small-scale criminal activity, in which enslavement is the sole purpose of the action. Taken together, warfare, slave-raiding, and kidnapping have accounted for the vast majority of new slaves in history. (Lovejoy, 1983: 3)

With a focus on the trans-Saharan trade, in the first instance, one should note that of the three large trans-Saharan routes, which rank among the oldest trunk roads in the world, one crossed present-day Libyan territory: originating from Tripoli on the eastern route, running through Murzuq and continuing into the Sokoto Caliphate and the Bornu Empire, both of which lie in present-day Northern Nigeria (Passon et al., 2020: 43). It has been argued that there existed in this sphere tremendous

trading in slaves who were destined for locations north of the Sahara Desert, the Mediterranean shores, and the Middle East (Kehinde, 2015). This trade-in “human commodity” helped tremendously in the sustenance of that international transborder trade system. It should also be noted that while the major *entrepôts* and centers of the trans-Saharan trade were located mostly up north of what is today Nigeria—Kano, Katsina, Zaria, Ngazargamu (Birnin Gazargamu), and Kuka—the sources of its slaves were the kingdoms, empires, and societies beyond the northern hemisphere, even further south to the great Benin empire and its neighbors. Thus, as this “Arab trade” crisscrossed the ‘Nigeria area, it sourced a significant proportion of its items of trade—including humans—from different places in the area and its surroundings (sub-Saharan Africa). Emphatically, most of the slaves sold and bought in this trade system were either slaves who were being resold for diverse reasons, or new captives who had been acquired through a series of methods including wars, raids, and kidnappings—the last method being the most popular (Kehinde, 2015).

Between 8 million (de Alencastro, 2002: 902) and 25 million (Bairoch, 1994) slaves were forcibly and violently plucked from Africa between the eighth and nineteenth centuries along the Oriental and the trans-Saharan routes of the Arab slave trade. Most of these slaves came from sub-Saharan Africa, while Arab, African, and Oriental traders were involved in their capture, as well as transport northward across the Sahara desert, into the Middle East and the Far East (Lumen Learning, 2006).

One thing that was instructive about these human cargoes that were ferried off sub-Saharan Africa (or where the Arabs referred to as *bilad-ul-Sūdân* (land of [the] Blacks) is not so much about their provision of needed manual labor for North Africa and the Arab world—where their legacies are still extant—but the manner through which they were “procured” for eventual enslavement. Undoubtedly, a vast majority of them were kidnapped and then sold into slavery (Kehinde, 2015).

In respect of the inglorious trans-Atlantic slave trade—which largely eroded the trans-Saharan routes—abundant evidence also exists to prove that at the base of the enslavement process of persons in that system was kidnapping. Most persons who were sold into slavery from the areas that eventually made up what is known today as Nigeria were kidnapped. As an eyewitness remarkably noted, “a slave’s journey to a life of servitude often began in the interior of Africa with his or her capture as a prize of war, as tribute given by a weak tribal state to a more powerful one, or by outright kidnapping by local traders” (Eye Witness to History, 2007). Of these various ways used to ensnare humans for sale, kidnapping was extensive, consisting of tens of millions of specific and individual experiences of capture distributed in time and space (Larson, 2000). Indeed, such was the case of Olaudah Equiano, the young Igbo boy who was kidnapped and sold into slavery in the 18th century. His famous and detailed narrative of his life (Equiano, 1789) is very instructive in this respect.

Further corroborating this position, Dr. Alexander Falconbridge,¹ in various testimonies in which he described his personal experiences of the processes of

¹Dr. Falconbridge, surgeon aboard a number of slave ships that plied between the West African coast and the Caribbean in the late 1700s, active anti-Slavery activist, author and Governor of a

enslavement of many Negroes, averred that by means of occasional inquiries which he made through interpreters, he procured some intelligence relative to the point. As he noted, “[T]here is great reason to believe, that most of the Negroes shipped off from the coast of Africa, are kidnapped” (Falconbridge, 1788: 13). Dr. Falconbridge went on to recount and present select striking instances of these acts, particularly from his experiences of those sold into slavery from Bonny, and Old and New Calabar areas (all in present-day Nigeria):

While I was in employ on board one of the slave ships, a Negro informed me that being one evening invited to drink with some of the black traders, upon his going away, they attempted to seize him. As he was very active, he evaded their design, and got out of their hands. He was, however, prevented from effecting his escape by a large dog, which laid hold of him, and compelled him to submit. ...I was likewise told by a Negro woman that as she was on her return home, one evening, from some neighbors, to whom she had been making a visit by invitation, she was kidnapped; and, notwithstanding she was big with child, sold for a slave. This transaction happened a considerable way up the country, and she had passed through the hands of several purchasers before she reached the ship. A man and his son, according to their own information, were seized by professed kidnappers, while they were planting yams, and sold for slaves. This likewise happened in the interior parts of the country, and after passing through several hands, they were purchased for the ship to which I belonged. It frequently happens that those who kidnap others are themselves, in their turns, seized and sold. (Falconbridge, 1788: 13–15. Cf. Dow, 2002: 138; Howard, 1971: 120)

In presenting further compelling instances, this eyewitness recounted thus:

During my stay on the coast of Africa, I was an eye-witness of the following transaction: a black trader invited a Negro, who resided a little way up the country, to come and see him. After the entertainment was over, the trader proposed to his guest, to treat him with a sight of one of the ships lying in the river. The unsuspecting countryman readily consented, and accompanied the trader in a canoe to the side of the ship, which he viewed with pleasure and astonishment. While he was thus employed, some black traders on board, who appeared to be in the secret, leaped into the canoe, seized the unfortunate man, and dragging him into the ship, immediately sold him. (Falconbridge, 1788: 14–15. Cf. Dow, 2002)

Elizabeth Isichei, in her work, *Igbo Worlds: An Anthology of Oral Histories and Historical Descriptions*, copiously quoted a certain interviewee of hers, Nkwonto Nwuduaku (aged c.60) of Urunnebo, Enugwu-Ukwu. Nkwonto not only clearly made allusions to the fact that slaves were obtained by kidnapping, but also took time to elucidate on some of the travails of kidnappers at the time. For example, Nkwonto noted that “...kidnappers did not carry their victims far because of the fear that they might be caught, or that their victims might overpower them. In such cases, you know that the slave dealers must have tipped the kidnappers and would be waiting in a nearby place” (Isichei, 1978: 30–34). Indeed, it was a precarious era and time where and when the rule was “the survival of the fittest.” Igbo and Ugwuoke (2013: 163) contend that “In those days, enemies usually took advantage of the night to invade their target communities with many atrocities, including head-hunting, kidnapping for rituals or slavery, raping of the womenfolk, and vandalism.”

freed slaves’ colony on the coast of modern-day Sierra Leone. Dr. Falconbridge’s testimonies are very credible and objective.

Thus, Nkwocha and Dibia (2014: 220) argue that the intensification of kidnapping in pre-colonial societies made routes and roads used by travelers and community fellows quite insecure.

All these were clearly remarkable evidences and instances of kidnapping which occurred during this pre-colonial period and were surely not limited to any one area, but generally widespread across the length and breadth of the “Nigeria area,” particularly around the coastal shores and their immediate interiors from whence the unfortunate kidnapped persons were got. One can reasonably argue that the act and nature of kidnapping in this period were fairly widespread, sophisticated, and well-known in many traditional societies in Nigeria. As Perry (2009: 1) aptly notes, kidnapping remains an underreported aspect of African agency during the slave trade eras.

In the Colonial Period

An important dynamic that needs to be pointed out here is the fact that all of these kidnapping trends of the pre-colonial era “naturally” transited and survived into the colonial times. Thus, it was not strange to see some elements of kidnapping for ritual sacrifices and slave trade/slavery becoming part of the colonial era experiences of many Nigerians. Here, a few such instances would be presented to buttress this point of the transition of acts of kidnapping into the colonial era.

On January 10, 1949, Efon-Alaaye, a small town in western Nigeria, witnessed a most shocking tragedy which shook the moral fiber of the community, and threw the whole town into panic and confusion. Adediwura, a 15-month-old baby girl of Mr. and Mrs. Ojo was kidnapped and eventually killed for what was suspected to be a ritual sacrifice. After a painstaking investigation by a crack team of the police, *Kabiyesi*, *Oba* (King) Samuel Adeniran Asusumasa, Atewogboye II, the 43rd *Alaaye* of Efon-Alaaye, alongside the herbalist and two others, was found complicit in the murder of the little girl who, it was revealed, was butchered in his presence, her eyes plucked out and her tongue cut off for a “long-life sacrifice” for the *Oba*. It was also reported that the *Oba* brought kolanuts with which he made all present to swear to an oath of secrecy, never to divulge the secrets of the happenings that night, after which the remains of the baby girl were taken into the forest and buried. The culprits in this crime—Oba Samuel Adeniran Asusumasa, one of his servants (Enoch Falayi), the herbalist, Daniel Ojo, and Gabriel Olabirinjo—were arranged in the colonial court for the murder of the baby. Upon the final pronouncement of guilt on the four accused persons by the court, they were all hanged to death on February 14, 1949 (*Daily Times* Newspaper, 2020).

The potential for and widespread nature of kidnapping was also experienced, imagined, and noted by Mawri villagers of neighboring Niger Republic who were immigrants to Nigeria, who believed they were mostly targeted because they were foreigners (Masquelier, 2000: 85). As they affirmed, “it was widespread knowledge that November was the most dangerous month to travel to Nigeria,” as part of the

preparations for Christmas by Igbo people included “kidnapping children to later sacrifice them for the Christian feast. ...November...is when a lot of children disappear without a trace” (Ibid.). As Masquelier (2000: 85) further posited, “Hausa speakers like to remind themselves that the Igbo were once headhunters who allegedly kept grisly trophies of their vanquished enemies.” These remarks clearly underlined the fact that the act of kidnapping, which had existed before the colonial period, was a lucrative “die-hard” practice that successfully crept into the colonial era, and had the uncommon propensity—despite the often over-bearing colonial laws and influences—to stay on, well into the post-colonial periods.

Afigbo (2006), referencing reliable archival documents of the colonial period,² substantiated the claim of kidnapping as a source of slaves for the inhuman slave trade. He argued that despite colonial prohibitions, slave dealings went on in Umuna where two kidnappers, Iwuoha and Ofor, after kidnapping some children took them to a very prominent market for the Umuna people—the Afor-Umuna market—for sale. He further elaborated thus:

Luckily for the victims, the kidnapping had been discovered quickly, as a result of which chase after the criminals had ensued... they [the victims] had been carried some six miles away from home and were very close to Afor-Umuna, another regional market that was noted for the sale of slaves even as late as the early 1940s...for some strange reasons, the government never found out about three other markets whose dark reputation in this regard [slave trading], and even in regard to the sale of human parts used for occult practices and spells, survived till the 1950s or even later. (Afigbo, 2006: 75–94)

On July 31, 1956, the front-page headline of the *West African Pilot* newspaper was an unusual one. It bore a very shocking headline: “500 Children Missing in Lagos.” The newspaper further reported the arrest of a certain 38-year-old Lamidi Alabi who was accused of kidnapping three children (all boys) on July 30, 1956. The victims—Masters Ganiyu Adisa, Musibawu Adio, and Asani Afoke—were between the ages of three and four. The newspaper further reported the riotous and difficult atmosphere which the arrest of Mr. Alabi created at the Lagos Central Police Station where he was then being held. As would be expected, such an act set off a moral panic and outrage in the immediate community, as the police had a hard time controlling a mob of over 5000 persons—largely composed of a “surging crowd of angry women” and mothers who wanted to lynch the offender for committing such a dastardly act (Aderinto and Osifodunrin, 2015). Those angry women and mothers certainly feared for the lives of their children, as such an evil act created an “uncertain danger” within their neighborhood and locality. But what was not clear to most observers at the time was that such kidnapping—particularly of defenseless children—had been ongoing and recording several victims, but had all gone relatively “unnoticed” or unannounced, as the case of “the fortunate three”—Mr. Alabi’s victims.

An interesting contradistinction appears to have emerged with the colonial Lagos scenario just examined. Contrary to the case of the Mawri immigrants who believed

²NAE. Rivprof 8/4/296, OW 334/16. “Rex vs. Iwuoha and Ofor Charged with Kidnapping of Children, Okigwe.”

foreigners were disproportionately targeted by the Igbo in the “Christmas-time kidnapping,” the belief in late colonial Lagos was that the menace of child kidnapping, though involving both strangers and indigenes, had more of strangers in the commission of the offense (Osifodunrin, 2013). However, on the basis of written evidence in colonial newspapers and records, such a claim or thought that strangers were often the perpetrators of this heinous crime was clearly unfounded. In contradistinction, Osifodunrin (2013) found and argued that though both strangers and indigenes/natives perpetrated these crimes, unlike the offender-indigenes who operated within a protective societal structure that concealed their identity, the strangers—who often acted alone and were not fully integrated into the Lagos society—had no hiding place as they were easily identified, reported and prosecuted by the colonial administration (Osifodunrin, 2013). Indeed, this was made clear with the evidence in the Efon-Alaaye case. To be sure, anyone—both indigenes/natives and foreigners—were perpetrators and/or victims of kidnapping.

Private rituals that involve human sacrifice of kidnapped persons also existed in the colonial era, as they did in pre-colonial times. Clearly, children have been major victims of such private ritual sacrifices (Reader, 1999: 558). As one would expect, not every case of kidnapping or “missing persons” became easily of public knowledge; usually only within family and kinship circles were such disappearances noted. Many such cases never really got mentioned beyond kindred or village circles, while peculiar circumstances of such sudden disappearances could also have been limiting factors for their proper resolution in some societies. Instructively, with the abolition of the slave trade and slavery and the criminalization of ritual killings by the colonial administration, acts of kidnapping—which were forerunners and accessories to these crimes—seemed to have begun to wane from the late colonial period. However, what was witnessed was the corresponding swift “transition” of these crimes to the underworld. This development led to a situation in which kidnapping metamorphosed and reappeared in the post-colonial period with much more vigor, and was largely perpetrated by organized crime syndicates. Kidnapping in this period equally became largely a “political tool.”

The Post-Independence Era

Since the end of colonial domination in Nigeria (1960), the country has witnessed an upsurge in violent organized crimes across the length and breadth of its territory. One such shocking crime on the increase in kidnapping, which seemed to have reached a crescendo with the onslaught on petrobusiness foreign workers, particularly Westerners, since the early 1990s (Odoemene, 2016), as well as the April 2014 brazen abduction (kidnapping) of some 276 female students from a secondary school dormitory in Chibok town of northeastern Nigeria by the infamous Islamist terrorist group, *Boko Haram*. While minor acts of kidnapping which were of a “local” nature largely went on uninhibited in many parts of the country in the post-colonial period, the most conspicuous cases of kidnappings which attracted major

attention and were of international dimension, were those directly linked to the Nigeria-Biafra (civil) war. Here, two kidnapping incidents—one of a local nature, and the other of an international dimension—deserve some exploration at this stage.

One clear takeaway from the Nigerian Civil War was its ethnic nature—both within the Biafran enclave and between the feuding sides during the civil war. Ethnic minorities, which made up approximately 40% of the Biafran population in 1966 (Omaka, 2014), were made to suffer indignities due to the suspicion by Biafran authorities that many of them were saboteurs, or “sabo,” as they were commonly branded (Omaka, 2014). Such suspicion led to several “combing” exercises to flush out or arrest persons believed to be undermining the renegade government (Akpan, 2014: 152). Some of these unpopular combing exercises led to atrocities by Biafran forces, including acts of kidnapping (Graham-Douglas, 1968: 17). Clearly, such civil war-related kidnappings were notorious and fairly widespread—becoming some of the easily known immediate post-independence cases of kidnapping in the country.

The civil war equally elicited another infamous account of kidnappings which had significant international dimensions (Omaka, 2019). This was the kidnapping of 18 workers (14 Italians, 3 Germans, and a Jordanian) of the Milan-based Italian oil company Azienda Generale Italiana Petroli (AGIP)³ by a squad of Biafran commandoes on May 09, 1969 (Omaka, 2019; Doron, 2014). The attack which led to these abductions took place at the Kwale-3 oil field on the west bank of the River Niger, near the town of Kwale, some 70 kilometers south of Onitsha (Achebe, 2012: 219; Doron, 2014). The oil workers allegedly provided Nigerians with sensitive military information about Biafran troop’s positions (Seibert, 2018), thus triggering the raid of their station during which they had taken up arms with their Nigerian guards (Doron, 2014: 137). They were eventually tried and sentenced to death on June 02, 1969, for aiding Nigerians in a genocidal war against Biafra. After a series of high-level pleas and international diplomatic maneuvers (Omaka, 2019; Seibert, 2018; Doron, 2014; Achebe, 2012), a ransom of ITL 18,000,000,000 (or USD 3,000,000) was eventually paid to free these condemned kidnap victims (Doron, 2014; *Los Angeles Times*, 1969: 6; *New York Times*, 1969: 10). This kidnap strategy was basically used to secure de facto recognition for the breakaway Biafran State (Omaka, 2019).

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, a series of disappearances of persons—particularly children—were routinely noted and mentioned in the news in different parts of the country. While many of these kidnap-related disappearances were not “celebrated cases,” they kept many persons on the alert and often created an atmosphere of fear and panic in the psyche of Nigerians. Similarly, varied variations of stories of attempted kidnappings and/or warnings for people to “stay safe” in the periods following the demise of key personalities in society, or the periods for the performance of certain “restricted” ritual observances in some communities were

³Another source (Omaka, 2019) has the name of the affected oil company as Ente Nazionale Idrocarbui (ENI).

very common. As was the case in the past milieus, kidnappers and headhunters roamed the streets during these “red-alert” periods (noted earlier) seeking for unfortunates who would be kidnapped and used for the associated rituals of human sacrifices (Onwumere, 2021: PC). Certainly, the abolition of communal human sacrifices was reinforced by the advent and strong rooting of Christianity and Islam in Nigerian society. Thus, these observances requiring human sacrifices were mostly of a private nature.

Most Nigerians emerged in the post-civil war era with a crude capitalist mindset of survival at all mean and by the fittest, thus abandoning the once-cherished societal value and norm of one being his brother’s keeper. This situation was made worse by the country’s economic woes, necessitating a sense of desperation. In this era, therefore, most people lived for themselves alone and were ready to do even the unthinkable to survive and/or flourish (Onwumere, 2021: PC). This selfish mindset and outlook on life was clearly antithetical to social progress in society. This situation was further exacerbated by the greed and conflict within the Nigerian state. Not minding the enormous human and material endowments, of the country, Nigeria was (and is) steeped deep in poverty and conflicts due to systemic corruption (Odoemene, 2016). For instance, decades of corrupt military dictatorships and inept civilian administrations led to the alienation of citizens, thus creating the conditions for conflicts and struggle over resource control to fester (Tonwe et al., 2012: 40). This environment provided an enabling environment for the festering of organized crimes and social disequilibrium in the Nigerian society. Therefore, as people became angry and bitter, disenchanted and frustrated, and disillusioned and desperate over these situations, they literarily began to prey on the weak in the society so as to survive these conditions (Odoemene, 2016: 260; Vigh, 2006a; Vigh, 2006b; Osaghae et al., 2007: 5; Osumah and Aghedo, 2011: 278). Typically, only the fittest literarily survived in the ensuing social dynamic.

A ready example of the crisis of the moment could be seen in the sinister kidnapping acts witnessed in the southeast region of Nigeria, particularly epitomized by the celebrated cases associated with the *Otokoto*⁴ saga from the early 1990s to about 1996. In this respect, mainly due to the activities of certain “new comers” to the town of Owerri and its environs, there was a heightening of criminal activities in the town. These men (and women?), who were stupendously rich, but with questionable sources of income, literarily terrorized the little town with their often brazen acts. Cases of missing persons often made the rounds in the town and these disappearances were often linked to the activities of these “new rich” in the society. As one would expect, the news of these ominous acts rocked Nigerian society and its media, thus sending shivers and panic throughout the town. The saga came to a crescendo with the confirmed kidnap and eventual killing of a 15-year old, Master Ikechukwu,

⁴As Odoemene (2012) notes, “*Otokoto*” has become the name given to the clandestine act of ritual murder in the southeastern part of Nigeria. For some in-depth discussion on the dynamics of the *Otokoto* incident in Owerri, from where the name was adopted, see: Odoemene, Akachi. 2012. “Fighting Corruption without the State: Civil Society Agency and the ‘*Otokoto* Saga’,” *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 25(3), 475–503.

by Mr. Innocent Ekeanyanwu in 1996. Other kidnappings also linked to the saga include that of a 6-year old, Master Amamasi and a host of others whose corpses were revealed during the exhuming from a shallow grave of the remains of Master Okonkwo from the Amakohia Owerri premises of Otokoto Hotel (Odoemene, 2012; Odoemene, 2011a).

Kidnappings of the Niger Delta Agitations

While these deplorable social, political, and economic scenarios were virtually the same throughout Nigeria, some sections of the country, particularly the Niger Delta region, began to experience another level of socio-economic and political oppression from the early 1990s (Odoemene, 2016: 261). Dissatisfied with this situation, even in their region, their youth intensified their agitations for adequate political representation, an increased and fair share of oil revenues, justice and equity in the management of their affairs, and a repair exploration (Odoemene, 2011b; Ehwarieme, 2009). Intense agitations in the region began in the early 1990s and were particularly against the Nigerian state and the petrobusinesses operating in the region (Tonwe et al., 2012). Two critical factors changed the dynamics of engagements in the region. The first was the unexpected execution on November 10, 1995, of Ken Saro-Wiwa, a Nigerian writer and outspoken environmental activist, by the General Sani Abacha junta. This development caused a lot of disaffection, anger and despondency in the region. The second factor was the “Kaiama Declaration” which was issued on December 11, 1998. The declaration was a response to the marginalization and environmental degradation experienced by the people of the Niger Delta. It not only demanded resource control and self-determination for the peoples of the region, but also raised critical awareness about the issues faced by the region and mobilized its local communities to not just ‘demand’ justice, equity, and development, but ‘act’ towards achieving those. These factors marked a turning point in the struggle for the rights of the Niger Delta people and influenced subsequent movements and actions in the region (Odoemene, 2013; 2011b; Ebienu, 2011; Ibaba, 2008). With these developments militancy, insurgency and other forms of violent agitations in the region came to a climax. Popular agitations and insurgencies by local “freedom fighters” became very rampant in many Niger Delta societies. Kidnapping emerged as one of the tactics used by these youth to drive home their demands. The dynamics of this development eventually plunged the Niger Delta into an unfortunate “grievance-driven” kidnapping hub in the country (Odoemene, 2016).

As different militant groups which had emerged in the region sequel to these developments began to benefit sufficiently from what was going on in their land, their nefarious operations, which was targeted at crippling the economic base of the Nigerian State as well as creating international awareness concerning the region’s plight, became quite notorious and deadly. These militants were not just well-organized but were equally very selective in their “target” hostages due to the

singular objective of their mission (Odoemene, 2016; Alexander and Klein, 2009: 11). In this respect, petrobusinesses were the original targets, and persons associated with such activities were frequently kidnapped and ransomed by these groups (Odoemene, 2016). Thus, over a few years, the region witnessed an unprecedented prevalence of kidnapping of foreigners: between January and December 2006, a total of 24 incidents, involving 118 hostages, were recorded (Ibaba, 2008: 14); between 2006 and 2008, Shell Petroleum Development Corporation (SPDC) alone claimed that 133 of its staff were kidnapped (Ngwube, 2013: 78–79). To be sure, few of these victims were hurt and some lives were also lost.

While it seemed there was very little scope for a “domestic ransom kidnapping business” in Nigeria especially due to widespread poverty among the people, as Briggs (2001: 13) had contended, such optimism was to be shattered from about 2007, when this grievance-driven Niger Delta variant of kidnapping became significantly transformed to a greed-driven venture (Obi, 2013: PC). This later form was essentially motivated by monetary profits, which transformation began, first in the Niger Delta. This rather radical transition in the context and content of kidnapping in the Niger Delta effectively initiated the domestication of kidnapping for ransom in other Nigerian communities—firstly, to the southeast, and later throughout the entire country (Odoemene, 2016)—as we shall see later. This transition from a grievance-driven rebellion to a greed-driven venture was expected given two critical factors. Firstly, the security restructuring in petrobusinesses, which saw a drastic reduction of expatriate staff, the “tightening of security” for those remaining, ensured that only a few unfortunate ones among the initial target group were able to be kidnapped, given a heightened security measure. The second reason was due to a failed political system, which enabled criminals who were used as thugs and then abandoned after general elections by Niger Delta politicians. Thus, “with the arms, huge ammunition and training at their disposal, they took advantage of the prevalent culture of violence in the region, quickly turning to organized crime” (Odoemene, 2016: 267). Unsurprisingly, kidnapping (for ransom) was preferred. This time, however, they turned against the wealthy local political elite in the society (ASI Global, 2012).

This strategy, in the militants’ calculations, was considered right, reckoning that their new target must have acquired a lot of wealth largely through fraud and/or at the expense of the masses. Thus, they were seen as part of society’s problem. ...In other words, though foreign nationals were still perceived as prize assets by the militants, this new brand of ransoming targeted high placed authority and society, especially their relatives, including aged people, youths and children, male and female alike. These political elite were considered “ransomable” by virtue of their social statuses (Odoemene, 2016: 267).

As has been shown, three motives—political, ideological, and financial—often underlay the reasons for the Niger Delta variants of kidnappings. Thus, two dominant perspectives with respect to kidnapping in this milieu existed. Firstly, it was perceived as a form of “coercive diplomacy,” especially directed toward compelling “the other party/parties” to accept or take a given course of action in a given political situation (Odoemene, 2016: 260). Often utilized as a form of last resort when all other diplomatic avenues and strategies have been explored, but collapsed without

success, this form of kidnapping was widely considered a “legitimate behavior” by many sympathizers of the Niger Delta youth insurgency in Nigeria (Omiloli, 2012: PC; Alfred-Smith, 2012: PC; Omotola, 2012: PC). Secondly, many others considered these acts as criminal, thus unacceptable and condemnable, irrespective of their contexts (Osuntokun, 2012: PC). If one is fighting a liberation struggle, why kidnap and ransom people? Kidnapping is a criminal act, thus remains a critical problem for those who advance the “liberation struggle” school of thought for militant groups. However, due to the fluidities of the boundaries between crime and struggle, the Niger Delta militants were able to legitimize their criminal acts in the name of struggle—trying to take what rightfully belonged to them (Odoemene, 2016: 264; Oriola, 2016).

Kidnapping: The Southeast Variant

The later Niger Delta variant of the kidnapping act, that is, for no other reason than purely for financial gain and “profit” (Shola Omotola, 2012: PC; Alexander and Klein, 2009: 11; Nwajiuba, 2009: 8) began to spread like a wildfire within the Nigerian polity. Firstly, it emerged in the region’s neighboring states of the southeast, and from about 2009 it became a major part of the crime dynamics in the area (Cyril Obi, 2013: PC). It was in this area that the trend became truly “localized” and effectively “domesticated” (“Jide Osuntokun, 2012: PC; Kenneth Nwoko, 2012: PC; *The News Magazine*, 2008: 8). With it becoming entrenched in this geo-political area, kidnapping simply became ‘a mercantile enterprise,’ “a lucrative business,” or as Osumah and Aghedo (2011) aptly noted, it became truly “commodified.” In other words, the criminal act was elevated to a form of “investment” from which investors expected optimal returns (Nwajiuba, 2009: 8). To be sure, the sociology of the people, as well as the unfortunate socio-political and economic fall-out of the civil war experiences may have accounted for such eventually disproportionate representation of the people of the southeast in the kidnap dynamics of the country at this time. During this period many people from the region, particularly the rich and wealthy in society, avoided coming back to or visiting the region for fear of being victims of kidnapping.

Undeniably, the presence of “domestic wealth and prosperity” capable of supporting the kidnapping business in the region made the whole difference (Odoemene, 2016). In other words, with their passionate entrepreneurial flair in all businesses, these “new kind” of kidnappers adapted their business models and the way they operated in response to, and to fit the prevailing market conditions (Briggs, 2001: 19). As Nwajiuba (2009) rightly emphasized in this respect, the southeasterners quickly learned and mastered the new trade of kidnapping for ransom, and in no time, made a success out of it, like they did over the years in other endeavors. Certainly, Osuntokun (2012: PC) had similar thoughts when he argued that “since people in the southeast are traditionally mercantilist and business people, kidnapping (for ransom) seemed to be for them just another business; a quick business

through which to make money.” In this respect, everyone—both the rich, high and mighty as well as the poor, lowly and weak in the society—was deemed to have a “kidnap value,” and thus, the likelihood of being kidnapped. In certain cities where this crime was too notorious, like Aba (in Abia State), even house helps (domestic servants) were being kidnapped and ransomed for pecuniary gains (Ohaka, 2021: PC). Instructively, this southeast variant of kidnapping accounted for 97% of ransom incidents recorded around the country between mid-2000s and 2012 (Control Risks Group, 2012: 1).

Dispersal and Explosion Across the Country

Because just anyone could become a victim of kidnapping in this “new” southeast context, it became very pervasive in society and was easily disseminated, within a short space of time, to other parts of the country. Despite being widespread throughout the country, different sections or parts had different prevalence rates. For instance, this kind of kidnapping quickly became an “established business” in Lagos, Ondo, Ekiti, and Oyo states, as well as in Edo, Kano, Kaduna and Abuja (Falayi, 2013: 37; Owenvbiugie and Olumese, 2011; Abati, 2009; Onojowo, 2001). Similarly, reports on kidnapping issues in the northern parts, especially since 2009 with the upsurge of the *Boko Haram* Islamic insurgency, equally dominated the news media (*Kidnapping and Ransoming Magazine*, 2013; Audu, 2013; Olugbode, 2013; Reuters News Agency, 2013).

In other words, by the end of the twentieth century and well into the twenty-first century, Nigeria had become notorious for kidnapping activities, which had emerged as a variant profession for criminality as armed robbery. Kidnapping became so rampant and “popular” among the citizenry that it earned the country the fourth position in hostage-taking globally from the American Bureau of Investigation (ABI) (Omonijo, 2019; Abdulkabir, 2017), as well as Nigeria is listed as the eighth (among ten) most affected countries by “economic kidnapping” (Odoemene, 2016: 259; Emanemua and Akinlosotu, 2016). Similarly, a decade later, the country became one of the “kidnapping capitals of the world” (Adibe, 2009), as well as being listed by the Control Risks Group, an independent global risk consultancy, as the world’s number one kidnapping hotspot in 2010 (Control Risks Group, 2012: 1). Thus, maybe more than anywhere else in the world since the late twentieth century, the phenomenon of kidnapping became a vibrantly lucrative nation-wide criminal malaise and industry in Nigeria (Odoemene, 2016: 259). It has continued to increase both geometrically and astronomically as the years went by. Indeed, as Abati (2009) aptly argued, the entire country had become “a kidnappers’ den.”

But nothing could have made the country so notorious as a “kidnappers’ den” than the combined fiery activities of *Boko Haram* terrorists, killer herdsmen, and “bandits” operating mostly in the northern parts of the country. For *Boko Haram*, the most notorious kidnapping and hostage-taking incident it staged was the brazen abduction of the Chibok girls in Borno State, sometime in April 2014 (Onuoha and

Oyewole, 2018; Habila, 2017; Zenn, 2014), which instantly attracted global attention, outrage and condemnation. The group also repeated the same feat with the kidnap of another 113 girls in Dapchi, Yobe State, sometime in 2017, soon after the release of just 100 girls from the previously abducted Chibok group (Ajah et al., 2020; Afolabi, 2020; Onuoha and Oyewole, 2018). In fact, due to the activities of this singular terrorist group, it was estimated that over 1000 children have been kidnapped in northeast Nigeria since 2013 (Busari, 2018). It has continued to terrorize Nigerians with kidnapping; though most of its victims were ransomed for huge amounts, some were not that lucky, as public executions—including of security personnel and Christian religious leaders—were often carried out (BBC, 2019; Oyewole, 2016a; Onuoha, 2014; HRW, 2012). While *Boko Haram* activities dominated the northeast zone of the country, the northwest, as well as almost every other part of Nigeria has continually faced the brutal scourge of the notorious Fulani herdsmen. Often (re)acting against the backdrop of resource-based conflicts between them and local farmer communities, the herdsmen have always unleashed terror on persons and groups, kidnapping being one of their key strategies. Indeed, such kidnapping attacks, which they often own up to, intensified across the country since about 2015, soon after the coming to power of Maj. General Buhari (rtd.), who has been their life patron for so long (Fasan, 2018).

The third set of groups—locally known as “bandits”—exist and operate in the northwest of the country. These are made up of diverse groups of persons who have taken to criminality due to some perceived grievance-based issues (Ademola, 2021; Malumfashi and Kaina, 2021). In addition to a range of criminal activities which include murder, robbery, rape, cattle-rustling, and the like, a particularly dastard engagement tactic of these groups of bandits has been the violent kidnapping of innocent and unsuspecting persons—and in very recent times, school children—across the length and breadth of the northwest, particularly in Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina, Niger, Kaduna, and Kebbi States. Most of their victims were often ransomed. Commenting on the banditry situation in the zone, the *Sultan* of Sokoto, Muhammadu Sa’ad Abubakar, lamented thus: “Bandits now move in the North from house to house with AK47... The region has become the worst place to live in Nigeria” (Ezigbo, 2020).

Clearly, the convergence of the activities of these very well-organized criminal groups, the effects of their often-dastardly acts of savage kidnappings, as well as the disappointing “I-don’t-care” attitude of the government toward containing these situations provided an environment that threatened to spiral the country completely out of control and containment. However, while these activities were mostly experienced in the northern parts of the country, the southern parts were not “free” from the scourge of kidnapers during the period. Indeed, their activities, like the experiences in the northern parts, also increased. Diverse stories were told of these acts of kidnappings—ranging from those who often got intercepted while on journeys to gory tales of the ordeals of those who were butchered and their body parts sold off to some “unknown human ritual *clientele*” because they or their family and/or friends could not raise the expected huge ransom often demanded by kidnapers.

Conclusion

As Lofkrantz (2009) and Ojo (2010) have shown in their studies, kidnapping is a historical phenomenon in both Northern Nigeria and Yorubaland and their environs. One also argues the same for Igboland and its surroundings too. Such sinister acts can be traced from the remotest times of the pre-colonial periods to the contemporary times in the life of most Nigerian communities. These are quite different from what many “later-day” writers and sources have claimed. Similarly, this act has survived through the colonial era—despite very stringent measures to check its practice—and well into the post-colonial era, where it has become ubiquitous in the Nigerian society. This chapter has unambiguously established these points. While the pre-colonial period witnessed the use of kidnapping as a means of acquiring humans for certain needs of persons and/or community—for instance, for sacrifice and slaves—the colonial era saw the concerted efforts by colonialists toward the suppression and extinguishing of such “needs,” thus the outlawing of both human sacrifices and slavery/slave trade. This situation necessitated two reactions: firstly, human sacrifice and slave trade went underground. In other words, while such acts diminished in public view and reckoning (at least to a reasonable extent), they simultaneously thrived clandestinely, keeping their occurrence away from public consciousness, and as Oyewole (2016a) suggests, became more prevalent due to the individualism cultivated by colonialism. Secondly, Baxter (2020) has argued that the very attempts by the colonialists to eradicate such societal vices—such as slavery and human sacrifice—may well have fed its continued prevalence, particularly clandestinely. Thus, with such a colonial onslaught, communities and individuals sought supernatural protection from such colonial incursions. Such “supernatural protections” may well have involved the kidnapping and wasting of human lives through sacrifices.

In contradistinction to what was observed in the pre-colonial and colonial stages, the later post-colonial stage witnessed an exponential increase in kidnapping activities due to a complete system breakdown—socially, economically, politically, and morally. What then emerged was a new twist to the kidnap trend—for ransom (pecuniary gains), an element which was hitherto largely non-existent in Nigerian society. With such dramatic changes in the fortunes of the country in respect of kidnapping, Nigeria became a world-acclaimed center for such burgeoning clandestine “business.” This situation was, however, to change further—for the worse—with the emergence of organized criminal groups and terrorists, such as *Boko Haram*, the bandits, and then the Fulani herdsmen. Together, these groups took the issue of kidnapping in Nigeria to another level, approach, and height—such of which were never known in the country.

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Chapter 4

Ungoverned Spaces and Kidnapping in Nigeria



Azeez Olaniyan

Abstract Kidnapping has become a common feature of Nigerian society, and it is a crime that happens almost on a daily basis. The rampancy of crime in Nigeria has attracted the attention of scholars, which has brought forth a plethora of insightful analyses on its causes, forms, and consequences. This chapter contributes to the discourse by looking at the phenomenon from the angle of ungoverned nature of several spaces in Nigeria. Specifically, it argues that the growing rate of kidnappings stems from the growing rate of ungoverned spaces in the country. It locates the problem from a global perspective, arguing that the problem of ungoverned spaces is neither race-bound nor country-specific. The study then explains why ungoverned spaces abound in Nigeria and why it has contributed to the rising menace of kidnapping in the country.

Introduction

Kidnapping has emerged as one of the major crimes in the world and has become one of the means by which violent non-state actors raise funds for their nefarious activities in the Middle East, Latin America, and different places in Africa (UNODC, 2021). In Nigeria, kidnapping either for ransom or ritual is a common phenomenon (Oyewole, 2016; Ezemenaka, 2018). Findings show that of the top 10 kidnapping endemic countries in 2007, Nigeria occupied the sixth position; and since 2007, it has moved up to the third position, behind Mexico and Columbia (Out and Adedeji, 2021). Kidnapping is a national occurrence in Nigeria. Several victims were also killed. However, the current style of ruthless and material-seeking kidnapping is a transformation from the activities of Niger Delta militants who initially deployed it as a means of drawing government's attention to the degradation of the Niger Delta region. It first spread to the southeastern region where it became a brisk business to

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the extent that between January 2008 and August 2012, 938 people were kidnapped and over \$200 million were paid as ransom (Out and Adediji, 2021).

Several factors have been identified as contributing to the menace of kidnapping in Nigeria, including unemployment, get-rich-quick syndrome, failure of intelligence gathering system, state failure, herdsman activities, and some traditional practices. Lately, the concept of ungoverned spaces has been adduced as a major contribution to the menace (Olaniyan, 2018; Ojo, 2020). Specifically, it has been argued that the Nigerian state has a litany of ungoverned spaces, and this has been exploited by violent non-state actors to engage in nefarious activities such as kidnapping. It then follows that a deeper engagement with the problem of kidnapping must factor into the phenomenon of ungoverned spaces. Some pertinent questions arising are: What are ungoverned spaces? How does it aid kidnapping? What are the issues in ungoverned spaces? How can the problem be addressed? This chapter interrogates these questions.

Following this introduction, this chapter goes into a conceptual discourse, which is followed by an interrogation of ungoverned spaces and criminality. The following section explores the interface between ungoverned spaces and kidnapping. This is followed by a discourse on kidnapping in Nigeria as a consequence of ungoverned spaces. The next section looks at the factors encouraging ungoverned spaces in Nigeria. This is followed by some suggestions on how to address ungoverned spaces as a way of conclusion.

Clearing the Conceptual Undergrowth

Kidnapping

Kidnapping is a dreaded act of criminality that is neither region-bound nor period specific. It is a crime that is as old as humanity. However, despite its longevity and universal occurrence, John Diamond (1985) argues that it is a concept whose codification started roughly in the seventeenth century. It is also a word that has witnessed tremendous change both in meaning and content. According to Diamond, the term was originally defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “carrying off (children or others) in order to provide servants or labourers for the American plantations” (Diamond, 1985: 2). That is, according to Perkin, kidnapping started to connote “the forcible abduction or stealing away of a man, woman or child from his own country and sending him into another” (cited in Diamond, 1985: 2). Flowing from the original meaning, kidnapping simply means “the forced recruitment of labour for the American colonies” (Diamond, 1985: 3). The definition grew from the etiology of the word itself, which combines “kid” (Small child) or indentured servants) and “nap” (snatch or catch). In the original definition, kidnapping takes place only when it involves the transportation of an abducted person from one country to another.

However, in the contemporary time, the word has changed in meaning and form. Notably, the requirement of inter-country transfer of hostages ceased to be a determining factor. Equally, forced recruitment or forced labor became an unnecessary part of the definition of this concept. The contemporary understanding of kidnapping is therefore different from some of these initial conceptions. The Nigerian Criminal Code Act of 1990 defines kidnapping as:

Unlawfully imprisons of any person in such a manner as to prevent him (or her) from applying to a court for his (or her) release or from discovering to any other person the place where he (or she) is imprisoned, or in such a manner as to prevent any person entitled to have access to him (or her) from discovering the place where he (or she) is imprisoned.

From the foregoing, it can be said that kidnapping takes place whenever an unlawful abduction of a person as captives against his/her wishes happens. It is basically a rational act that involves planning, execution, and management. In the words of Tzanelli (2006: 1), “kidnapping presents all the characteristics of a rationalized system of exchange, based on rules and regulations.” Therefore, kidnapping is seldom a mere happenstance or a random act. In terms of motives, scholars have argued that perpetrators engage in it for gains which could range from monetary gains from ransom (UNODC, 2021; Rivers et al., 2021), political concession (Jenkins, 2018; Gilbert, 2019; Simon, 2019), sexual pleasure (Lutya, 2012; McDermott, 2018), human shield (Morris, 2016; *Kachin News Group*, 2021), or ritual killings (Oyewole, 2016).

The most popular of the motives, down the ages, have been kidnapping for ransom. For this genre of kidnapping, Stubbert et al. (2015) explain the contributions of Pharaoh and Turner in developing some typologies. For Pharaoh, kidnapping for ransom can be grouped into three: political, for ransom and abductions. Turner grouped it into four types: ransom and political, ransom and not political, political and no ransom, not political and no ransom. The inadequacy of these typologies made Stubbert et al. (2015) come up with five categories: (1) single, (2) group, (3) express, (4) political, and (5) virtual. According to him, while single kidnapping is a one-man squad, operating like a lone wolf to make quick cash; group kidnapping involves more than one person operating like a gangster. Express kidnapping occurs when kidnappers force their victims to withdraw money for them from the ATM machine. It often involves multiple perpetrators and tends to be short lived because the victims are released mostly after doing the cash withdrawal. Political kidnappings are carried out to obtain political concession from the government or to release comrades-in-crime already in security custody. Lastly, virtual kidnapping occurs when victims hide himself/herself somewhere and falsely tell relatives through the phone of his/her kidnap. Here the person pretends to have been kidnapped and then requested for ransom to be paid for his release. All these are present in Nigeria, and this makes it possible to appropriate this typology to discuss the Nigerian variant of the kidnapping business.

Ungoverned Spaces

The concept of ungoverned spaces is highly contested, and the exact meaning is yet to be agreed upon by scholars. In its pristine meaning, ungoverned spaces refer to both physical and non-physical spaces of a state where effective control is absent or at best partial. This implies a vacuum in state control of parts of its territory. In essence, according to Theo Neethling (2014: 340), ungoverned spaces ensured “where governments are not in control of the length and breadth of the geographical territories that constitute their country or states.” In the analysis of Olaniyan (2018), an area is termed ungoverned when it is occupied by non-state actors as a result of the inability of the central government to exercise its dominion over its territory. The spaces left unoccupied by the state are often occupied by armed non-state actors. When such actors resort to violent ends or means, then it becomes a problem for the affected government.

The concept of ungoverned spaces is regarded as state-centric because it sees spaces in relation to state sovereignty. Specifically, the state is regarded as the custodian of territorial space within its sovereignty. A state is therefore expected to be in control of every inch of what constitutes its territory. When it happens that the state is not in control of all or some parts of its territory, the spaces left unoccupied become ungoverned spaces. The danger in such instances is the occupation of such entities by Violent Non-State Actors (VNSA).

However, the state-centric approach has been criticized. Scholars like Jennifer Keister (2014) and Phil Williams (2016) have argued that no space is entirely ungoverned and that the whole idea of ungoverned spaces stems from the mentality of attributing governance only to the state. According to this perspective, there is a difference between government and governance, and the work of governance is not restricted to the domain of the state. Non-state actors can, and have in various instances, carry out what is called alternative or complementary governance (Williams, 2016). The argument is that what is called ungoverned to the state centrists is being governed and being provided alternative government by sub-national elements because of the absence of the state (Williams, 2016; Olaniyan, 2018). What should become a source of concern is the nature of governance being carried out in the spaces. From this perspective, academic discussion should have been on legitimate or otherwise of the government and the governance.

In addition, it has been argued that ungoverned spaces are not created by violent groups (Taylor, 2016). Rather, violent groups only make use of the spaces after they have been created by the absence of the state. The import of this is that no space is entirely free. Virtually all spaces have come under one control of either individual states or the global community. It is only when such places are not entirely dominated by the state that non-state actors can occupy them. Also, ungoverned spaces are not weak-state specific. According to Fisher and Mercado (2014), they exist in “regions, territories and countries at all levels of development.” This means, there are presence of ungoverned territories in the most advanced societies in various forms. That is why the United States with all its technological sophistication is also

home to crimes and abductions. According to the Child Crime Prevention and Safety Center (2019), a child goes missing every 40 seconds in the United States, and an estimated 840,000 children are reported missing each year, although the overwhelming majority are successfully rescued by security operatives. A 2016 report in New Zealand indicated that a total of 84 children, made up of 36 teenagers aged 15–19 years; 21 children aged 10–14 years, 12 children aged 5–9 years, and 15 preschoolers aged 0–4 years, were victims of abductions or kidnap (Dougan, 2017). Added to this is the fact that ungoverned spaces are not peculiar to rural areas. They exist in urban centers too in the form of hideouts, dark alleys, and slums, which are mostly inhabited by the lower class of the society. Studies confirm high incidents of urban crimes, being perpetrated by elements hiding from the law in ungoverned spaces that abound in urban places (Lamb, 2008).

What the following discourse shows is that every state has its own ungoverned or under-governed spaces, which are not peculiar to remote areas. However, the difference between the strong and weak states is the capacity to respond to threats from their ungoverned spaces. Thus, while the strong state has the capacity to deal with and neutralize threats from their ungoverned spaces because of their dominion capacity over their territories, weak states do not have such capacity, and thus can easily be overwhelmed or stretched by the threats from their own ungoverned spaces. In the same vein, governance, to be regarded as one, must have some legal backing and some elements of legitimacy. Nevertheless, the governance provided by violent non-state actors cannot be considered legitimate one by international standards. In such a situation of governance, laws are given by force and citizens have no right of complain to unwholesome policies. Accordingly, it goes to say that ungoverned spaces go along with the state. This study subscribes to the state-centric understanding of ungoverned spaces, and it helps explain the growing rate of criminality in different parts of the world.

Ungoverned Spaces and Criminality

Studies have established that a strong relationship exists between ungoverned spaces and criminality. Theo Neethling (2014) identifies ungoverned spaces as part of the major reasons for the preponderance of rebel movements in DRC. According to him, the large swathe of land the country is blessed with seems to be beyond the control of the state, which gives room for rebel groups to breed. In establishing a strong linkage between ungoverned spaces and crimes in the Horn of Africa, Ken Menkhaus (2014) argues that most parts of southern Somalia, southern Sudan, portions of northern Uganda, eastern Somaliland, northern frontiers of Kenya, and Karamoja areas of eastern Uganda are either completely bereft of presence of government or at best nominally governed by the state. Such absence or partial presence of governance “often correspond to chronic levels of local insecurity, including armed criminality, communal clashes, and warlordism” (Menkhaus, 2014: 340). Drawing from as many global cases as possible, Anne Clunan and Harold Trinkunas

(2010), in their edited volume, *Ungoverned Spaces*, explain how ungoverned spaces constitute mortal threats to global peace at both physical and non-physical levels such as the internet and global finance. Also, Abasa Afrano (2015) examines the role of ungoverned spaces in the emergence and survival of the Lord's Resistance Army, the terrorist group operating in the jungles of Uganda and DRC. In another instance, according to Galeana Abarca Andres (2014), the drug business in Mexico, and the difficulty in tackling it, owes largely to the presence of numerous ungoverned spaces in the country.

According to Southern Pulse (2011), most neighborhoods in each of the capitals in Central America's Northern Triangle—San Salvador, Tegucigalpa, Guatemala City—are mostly controlled by youth gangs. In addition, the cities of San Pedro Sula and the port of La Ceiba in Honduras, as well as those of Coban in Guatemala, have several urban slums that are outside of government control. In the same vein, the emergence and festering of violent elements such as ISIS, Taliban, Houthis rebels, AQIM, and sundry terror groups in different parts of the Middle East and Asia, Latin America have been attributed to opportunities provided by pockets of ungoverned spaces in the environs (UNODC, 2021).

In the case of Nigeria, Olaniyan (2018) locates the multiplicity of ungoverned spaces as enablers of such crimes as insurgency, armed robbery, banditry, ritual killings, cannabis cultivation, and kidnapping. In what appears as a build-up on this study, Sunday Ojo (2020) argues that the continued inability to easily route out Boko Haram elements, killer herdsmen, and rampaging bandits in northern Nigeria owes to the presence of ungoverned spaces in the northern Nigeria. The study of Ifeanyi Owuzuruigbo (2020) also attributes the preponderance of bandits in north-western Nigeria to the presence of ungoverned spaces.

Ungoverned Spaces and Kidnapping

One of the major acts of criminality in the contemporary time is kidnapping, and studies have identified ungoverned spaces as a major enabling environment for its perpetuation. In Colombia, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a Marxist guerilla cum terrorist group operating from the huge Amazonian jungle, engage in the kidnapping of government officials as bargaining instruments in the drawn-out war of over 50 years with the Colombian state (Stubbert et al., 2015). Haiti is generally regarded as an ungoverned state, and this has been said to explain the rampancy of crimes, notably kidnapping. It was argued that kidnapping takes place every moment, and victims, which cut across classes, are picked opportunistically every time of the day from as simple as traffic holdups. At least, 628 incidents of kidnapping were recorded in Haiti between January and October, 2021 (Daniels, 2021).

For over 30 years, the Lord's Resistance Army has employed the cover of huge ungoverned forest spaces bordering Uganda, DRC, and South Sudan to engage in abduction, purposely for ransom rape, forced marriage, forced impregnation, and

sexual slavery of young girls (Muhumuza, 2017). According to Cawley (2014), Mexico is the kidnapping capital of the world, and studies confirm that the nefarious activity is aided by abundant ungoverned spaces in the country, an indication of the inability of the state to enforce its dominion over its vast territory. In Caracas, Venezuela, kidnapping, and muggings are endemic, so common in several neighborhoods that almost every family has produced victims, largely due to the presence of hideouts and dark alleys that are not covered by the state (Southern Pulse 2011). In Brazil the ungoverned spaces are not only restricted to the Amazonian border regions, but also present in the urban spaces of Rio, Sao Polo, Salvador, and Recife, which are all hotbeds of muggers, kidnappers, and pickpockets (Southern Pulse 2011).

The Sahel and Sahara regions of Africa are notorious hotbeds of kidnappings and ransoming. This crime has been so difficult to combat because of the weak nature of the states located in the regions, which eventually provided grounds for terrorists to operate and perpetuate criminal activities, majority of which is abduction for ransom (Grahams, 2011). In the Philippines, the Abu Sayyaf Group and Moro Islamic Liberation Front are the main terror groups operating in Basila, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi provinces in the Sulu Archipelago and the rugged islands of Mindanao, which is often beyond the control of the state. They fund their violent campaign through kidnapping for ransom (Bhattacharji, 2009).

Ungoverned Spaces and Kidnapping in Nigeria

The Nigerian state has come under dangerous grip of kidnapping. By the first half of 2021, a total of 2731 persons have been kidnapped across the country (Vanguard, 2021). Kidnapping used to be an isolated occurrence before it was adopted by the Niger Delta militants in the late 1990s as a way of drawing the attention of the state to the plight of environmental degradation in the oil-producing areas. It started with the abduction of expatriate oil workers for ransom. The problem later spread to the Igbo speaking southeastern area where kidnap for ransom operates on an industrial scale. For a long time, the problem was restricted to the region. Later, the Boko Haram insurgents, in the bid to raise funds for their violent activities, advance their ideological and ideological interests, and also satisfy their sexual pleasure, resorted to kidnapping people. In what amounted to a major haul, they abducted over 200 girls from their school dormitory in Chibok town. There was a global outcry and it brought the terror group into global attention. They repeated the dastard act in 2018 by kidnapping another set of girls in Daptchi town.

However, in recent times, kidnapping has spread to all parts of the country, and it is perpetrated by different kinds of criminal elements. Several news sources have identified the Fulani ethnic group as the major perpetrator of kidnapping in the country in recent times. They operate either as herdsmen or bandits. Under the guise of herdsmen, the Fulani group invaded several forests in virtually all parts of the country and launched attacks on travelers. Their victims ranged from the rich to the poor riding inside commercial buses. Their style involves mounting road blocks and

abducting passengers inside buses, and march them into the inner recesses of forests where they are kept for days. They will use the victim's mobile phones to call relations and demand ransom. Those who are unable to pay are often killed or dehumanized. In the past 2 years, bandits have turned the whole of northwestern Nigeria into a kidnapping zone, and thousands of people have been abducted and sometimes killed in the process. Kidnapping takes place daily in Nigeria and it is quite difficult to keep up with its counting, but a few very recent examples are relevant to be cited here.

On December 11, 2020, about 300 students of Government Secondary School, Kankara in Katsina state were abducted by gunmen in their school hostels. It took several days and payment of ransom before they could be rescued by security forces and local vigilantes (Aljazeera, 2020). A few days later, another 80 students of Islamiyah (Quranic) school who are mostly girls in a procession to celebrate the birthday of Prophet Mohammed, were abducted at Dandume local government area of the state by bandits (Obiezu, 2020). In February, 2021, bandits carried out an overnight raid on a boarding school in Niger State, killed a student, and abducted 42 people, including staff and students (Muhammad, 2021). On July 04, 2021, many gunmen riding on motorcycles stormed the premises of Bethel Girls Schools in Kaduna and took away 140 of the school girls. On the same day, another set of gunmen raided the National Tuberculosis and Leprosy Center in Zaria and abducted eight people, including two nurses and a 12-month-old baby (BBC, 2021). In early March 2021, unknown gunmen breached the perimeter fence of the Federal College of Forestry Mechanization in Kaduna and abducted 39 students (VOA, 2021). In April 2021, another set of gunmen invaded Greenfield University in Kaduna and abducted students, killing two in the process (Enyioch, 2021). In May 2021, a raid by kidnappers on an Islamic school in Tegina, Rafi local government of Niger State resulted in the abduction of 136 pupils (Olufemi, 2021).

In all the above-cited cases, some of the victims spent as much as 3 months in captivity before they were released after heavy ransoms were paid by their families. As mentioned earlier, several factors account for the menace of kidnapping in Nigeria. Of all the factors, however, ungoverned spaces prove to be the most plausible. Various places have become grossly ungoverned in the Nigerian state, and this has given the kidnappers the leeway to continue with their nefarious actions. In Nigeria, kidnappers operate on major roads at will; some people are kidnapped inside school premises; some are tracked to their homes and abducted, and there are cases of abductions inside worship houses. Abducted victims are taken into the forests where they are kept and are moved around (Olaniyan, 2018). The forest space has thus become a major enabler and sustenance of kidnapping.

Forests as Ungoverned Spaces for Kidnapping in Nigeria

Nigeria is blessed with huge forests. It has 1129 forest reserves, 29 game reserves, 4 game sanctuaries, and 7 national parks (Thisday, 2021). Unfortunately, many of them have been invaded and turned into, in the words of Governor Rotimi Akeredolu, “hideouts for keeping victims of kidnapping, negotiating for ransom, and carrying out other criminal activities” (Kabir, 2021). The kidnappers set up camps inside the forests where they live and keep their victims until ransoms are paid. They run the camps like a fortress where they plan to launch kidnap attacks and countermeasures against the national security forces trailing them. The most notorious of these forests are in northern Nigeria. Specifically, the Northern region of Nigeria is today a hotbed of activities of insurgents and bandits that take kidnapping as one of their major preoccupations. They operate with ease due to the sanctuary provided by the forest canopies and landscape, which are largely beyond the control of the Nigerian state.

According to Daily Trust (2021), there are nine major forests in the northern region from where kidnappers operate. They are Sambisa, Alagarno, Kamuku, Kuduru, Kuyambana, Burwaye, Ajja, Dajin Rugu, and Sububu. The nine forests link up the entire northern region and some neighboring countries. The forests are interconnected, which makes it possible for kidnappers to move from one state to the other, with their victims, and without being detected by security agents. Each of the nine forests has its own “resident” criminals who take kidnapping as part of their major illicit activities. Sambisa forest straddles Borno, Yobe, Gombe, Bauchi, Jigawa, and some parts of Kano state. It is the hotbed of Boko Haram insurgents who use the space to keep abducted women and children (Olaniyan, 2018; Daily Trust, 2021). Falgore Forest cuts across three local governments of Tudun Wada, Doguwa, and Sumaila in Kano state (Daily Trust, 2021). Dajin Rugu straddles Birnin Gwari in Kaduna State, through parts of Katsina State and ends in Zamfara State (Daily Trust, 2021). The thick forest serves as a major route through which kidnappers move from one state to another (Okoro, 2021). Kuyumbana, Burwaye, Ajja, and Sububu forests extend from Zamfara to Kaduna states, and they are major hiding places for kidnappers (Okoro, 2021). Kuyumbana was so notorious as a dangerous haven that it was described as “the forest that kills” (Jibrin, 2016). Criminals camping inside the forests have been responsible for the death of hundreds of people, the majority of who are killed for inability to pay ransom.

Several of the forests in southern Nigeria are also dens of kidnappers. The forest located along Benin-city Express bypass is known as “evil forest” because of its notoriety as a haven for kidnappers who waylay travelers and march them into the forests, where they are asked to bring ransom (Ebegbulem, 2013). In Ekiti state, the forests between Ikere and Akure; Ikere and Ise, and Esure are notorious kidnapper’s dens (Olaniyan, 2018; Nejo, 2021). In Oyo state, the forest around the road linking Ibadan and Ijebu-Ode, and Oke Ogun axis are infamous kidnappers’ areas of

control, where commuters are readily picked, tortured, and ransomed (Malik, 2021). In 2017, the search for a kidnap victim led to the discovery of Aniocha forest in Enugu state as a kidnappers' den, when the body of the victim and several others were found deep inside the forest (Mamah, 2017). In Imo state, forests such as Igwebuike, Awara, Avu, Lili, and Ikpaoha have all been identified as hideouts for kidnappers (Blueprints, 2017; Ebhomele, 2017; Alozie, 2017).

Everywhere Is Ungoverned

It is not only forest spaces that are ungoverned. Many Nigerian roads are also grossly ungoverned. A study conducted by Sunday Vanguard (2019) shows 133 major highway roads across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria where kidnapping by bandits, terrorists, and other criminals take place almost on a daily basis. This is apart from kidnappings that take place on other minor roads throughout the country. The implication of this is that the state's presence is absent from these spots. Because of this absence, hundreds of commuters are daily being abducted, killed, or ransomed. In the same vein, schools and homes are fast becoming ungoverned spaces where kidnapping takes place at will. The instances cited above gave a fillip to the precarious situation of school premises. In addition, several people have been abducted from their homes and taken away until ransoms are paid. Some never returned.

Urban spaces could also become safe havens for criminalities (Lamb, 2008). Cities, despite being elite spheres and the nucleus of infrastructure, have been known to harbor slums that are often difficult to secure. Generally, slums are widely known to be breeding grounds for criminals and touts, due largely to the fact that they are generally occupied by the lowest class of citizens, are filthy, unorganized, and therefore governed by undesirable elements with their own set of rules (Ekpenyong and Nyenye, 2019). Nigerian cities are noted for harboring slums, dark alleys, and shanty homes where criminals inhabit and perpetrate crimes of varying proportions. Fieldwork conducted in Lagos by Franca Attoh and Emmanuel Fapetu (2018) confirmed the increasing rate of kidnapping within urban spaces. According to them, major kidnapping activities in Lagos state occurred in the numerous urban sprawls, and everyone was a target. Similar problems occur in different cities across the country. The main reason for this is that these places are grossly under-governed by the state security forces.

The Nigerian waterways are another ungoverned space. For example, the Nigerian portion of the Gulf of Guinea has been reputed to be the least governed in the whole of West Africa (Independent, 2020). As a result, the place has become a nest of pirates who indulge in robbery and kidnapping for ransom. Studies confirm a total of 375 cases of actual and attempted piracy attacks in Nigeria within a period stretching from 2008 to 2020 (Statista, 2020; Independent, 2020). In addition, the Lake Chad waterways were taken over by Boko Haram elements and made the place a contested battle between the state forces and the non-state actors.

Accounting for Ungoverned Spaces in Nigeria

Several factors account for the growing rate of ungoverned spaces, which is aiding kidnapping in Nigeria. The first is that the Nigerian forests, which, as argued heretofore, are the haven of kidnappers, are left without state presence. There is a lack of forest guards. During the colonial time, and shortly after the independence, the forests were manned by guards. This prevented the invasion of space by nefarious elements. However, following the military takeover of power, this practice was discontinued, and the forest was left without security. Part of the consequences of this abandonment is the invasion by kidnappers and other violent elements. Also, forests often proved difficult to secure. According to Olaniyan (2018), three main reasons make forests difficult to secure:

First, the cover provided by clusters of trees and leaves offers opportunities to hide from security forces. Second, forests are often isolated and far from human habitations, therefore offering secluded sites for criminality. Three, most forests are vast in size and therefore most beyond the reach of security forces. (Olaniyan, 2018: 5–6)

Added to the above is the lack of professionalism, intelligence gathering capacity, corruption, motivation, and necessary equipment by the security forces to secure the forest space. As argued above, forests are often vast and remote, which means a high level of technical equipment and specialized training are required. The absence of these makes the spaces open to criminals. The absence of intelligence gathering system and lack of capacity was reflected in the statement of one of the survivors of kidnapping thus:

Kidnappers don't move in the daytime. Immediately they kidnap someone, they would move to the bush in that environment, but the following day, at about 7 pm when they know people are no longer on the farms, they would move to another place. They don't move in the afternoon. If the security agents are looking for them in the afternoon, it would be difficult to see them. The kidnappers keep their victims in places such as holes and under rocks where they cannot be located even if you are monitoring with a helicopter, you would not locate them. Like in our case, they hid us under a rock and nobody was able to locate us there. (Quoted in Kabir, 2021)

The inadequacies of proper security cover explain why other spaces, such as schools and streets are open for kidnappers to operate. Specifically, the reality that the Nigerian state is found wanting in the task of securing its territory led to the easiness of kidnapping by people who act singly, or in groups to perpetuate kidnapping.

The major way to stop kidnapping is for the Nigerian state to govern all its territories, with significant quality and quantity of security presence. Thus, it must invest in technology, enhance the capacity of the security forces in intelligence gathering and be adequately motivated in terms of work environment and welfare packages. The issue of corruption is a major cankerworm that should be frontally tackled. Most importantly, the forest guard system must be returned with better training and welfare.

Conclusion

The chapter has been devoted to explaining kidnapping as a consequence of ungoverned spaces in Nigeria. The chapter found a strong linkage between ungoverned spaces and criminality, the chief of which is kidnapping. The chapter drew from global occurrences to show that kidnapping is neither race-bound nor country-specific. It also explains the concept of ungoverned spaces and the contributions to the growing rate of criminalities across the world. The paper argues that ungoverned spaces are a global occurrence, and present in virtually all states of the world. However, the study argues that the case of Nigeria is troubling because the situation gets worse almost on a daily basis and the kidnappers get brazen by the day. Again, there seem to be no serious efforts to combat the menace. The study identifies the root causes of ungoverned spaces in the country and suggests how to address the challenge.

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Chapter 5

Oil-Related Kidnapping in the Niger Delta Region



J. Shola Omotola and Oluwafemi Fayomi

Abstract Niger Delta is the core region for oil and gas production, which is the mainstay of Nigeria's economy. Yet, the region is a major conflict theatre, where several militant and criminal groups have emerged in support of popular uprising against oil-induced environmental crisis. This region that is dominantly inhabited by minority ethnic groups has equally emerged in resistance of ethno-politics of majoritarian dictatorship, which has turned it into a mere extractive site without commensurate development. Amidst these, kidnapping has emerged as one of the tactics and strategies employed to advance greed and grievances of militant and criminal groups in the Niger Delta region, with negative consequences for both the state and society. Accordingly, this chapter examines the manifestation, causes and consequences of oil-related kidnapping in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria's national security has been a matter of serious concern over the years. The problem is multifaceted, including insurgency and terrorism, piracy, and political violence, among others. While all these strands of insecurity have been devastating in their manifestations, regularity and consequences, kidnapping has recently

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assumed a much more terrifying dimension, with Nigeria ranking as second on the list of the 10 riskiest countries for kidnapping for ransom globally (Constellis, 2017).

Whereas kidnapping for ransom and rituals has been a longstanding national security challenge across the country (Ayuba, 2020; Ikime, 2006; Odoemene, 2014; Oyewole, 2016a; Perlberg, 2013), this chapter primarily focuses on oil-related kidnappings in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Such a focus is important because, as the International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR) (2020) reveals, a whopping sum of \$18.34 million was paid by families, friends, and loved ones of kidnap victims in Nigeria to kidnappers from June 2011 to March 2020. The report showed further that \$11 m was paid out between January 2016 and March 2020. Though nationwide, the phenomenon seems much more prevalent and acute in the Niger Delta, where the ICIR report listed Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers states, three states at the heart of oil and environmental politics in Nigeria (Omotola, 2006, 2009, 2010a), as 3 of the top 10 states with the highest number of reported kidnap incidents in Nigeria. Earlier, precisely between 2006 and 2012, over 200 foreigners were reportedly kidnapped in the Niger Delta, making thousands of expatriate workers and their families leave the country and in the process abandon oil production and infrastructural projects development in the region (Chinwokwu, 2013).

What is the form and character of oil-related kidnappings in the Niger Delta? Why is the problem so prevalent and acute in the region? How do oil-related kidnappings affect Nigeria's national security? These are the broad concerns addressed in this chapter, the primary objective of which is to underscore the deepening crisis and contradictions of the phenomenon and how it affects Nigeria's national security. The chapter argues essentially that the rise and eventual escalation of kidnapping in the Niger Delta is not unconnected to oil and environmental politics that has generated deepening crisis and contradictions of governance and development in the region, including the struggle for environmental justice. The excesses of the state in responding to the activities of militant groups, including oil bunkering, piracy and armed robbery against ships, pipeline vandalism, etc. contributed to the escalation of the 'kidnapping enterprise' in the region. This has come at heavy costs to both state and society, including huge loss of lives and revenues, violation of human rights, as well as negative effects on national image and security.

Conceptualizing Oil-Related Kidnappings in the Niger Delta

Before conceptualizing our usage of "oil-related kidnappings in the Niger Delta," it is important to first explain the concept of militancy. This is important because kidnappings in the region take place within the contexts of oil and environmental politics characterized by militancy (Omotola and LaMonica, 2014; Omotola, 2009, 2010a). Militancy, like many other ideas in political science, lacked a broadly accepted definition. Militancy is frequently linked to violence. Militancy is frequently associated with violence and fanaticism; however, this is not always the case. In recent years, the terms militant and terrorist have been used interchangeably (Quamruzzaman, 2010). The act of individuals, groups, or parties displaying or engaging in violence, usually

for a cause, whether religious, political, ideological, economic, or social, is referred to as militancy. It has also been characterized as a violent response in an area, community, state, or nation by a person, organization, or sect in response to claims of underdevelopment, political oppression, religious convictions, or segregation. Militancy is defined as a state or condition of being combative or prepared to fight (Chindah and Braide, 2000). In essence, a militant is someone who takes violent action in response to perceived injustice and oppression (Firdous, 2016).

Generally speaking, kidnapping entails the illegal capturing of someone and holding them as a prisoner in exchange for ransom (money) or for ritual, using force or deception (Chukwurah, 2011; Abraham, 2010). With these clarifications, we define oil-related kidnappings in the Niger Delta as any kidnap that shares one or more of the following attributes:

- (a) The kidnapping is carried out by Niger Delta militant groups or gunmen.
- (b) Carried out on Niger Delta soil, that is, in any of the states officially recognized as Niger Delta, both geographical and political. However, we place greater emphasis on kidnappings in the geographical Niger Delta: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Edo, and Rivers states.
- (c) Carried out in contiguous states but outside the Niger Delta by Niger Delta militants.
- (d) If the victims (the kidnapped) are directly connected to oil multinationals and other oil companies, including top functionaries of oil multinationals.
- (e) If the victims are indirectly connected to oil multinationals and other oil companies, including families of top officials of oil multinationals, contractors, and construction workers.
- (f) If the kidnapping involves attacks on oil vessels and their crews.
- (g) If the victims are government officials at any level of government: federal, state, and local.

For the sake of clarity, the Niger Delta, known as the south-south geopolitical zone consists of six states, namely Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Edo, and Rivers states. These six states constitute the geographical Niger Delta. However, it is important to note that there is also the political Niger Delta, which consists of the geographical Niger Delta, as well as Ondo, Abia, and Imo states, recognized as part of the Niger Delta Development Commission's (NDDC) catchment areas because they are oil-bearing states (LaMonica and Omotola, 2014a; Omotola, 2006, 2009).

The Emergence of Militancy in the Niger Delta

Militancy in the Niger Delta is longstanding. It predates the attainment of political independence in 1960. Though with pocket of activities in the pre-colonial and colonial periods, the first real attempt at resistance in Nigeria took place on 23 February 1966 when Issac Boro declared the Niger Delta Republic (NDR) at Tantonabau in the Riverrine areas of the former Eastern region with about 150 volunteer forces (Omotola, 2010a; Augustine, 2010; Dokubo, 2005). While the agitations continued in various dimensions, the next major manifestation of

dissent against the state, though in a largely non-violent form, was the rise of Ken Saro-Wiwa, an internationally acclaimed human and environmental rights activist in the 1990. He was the leader of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), which presented the Ogoni Bills of Rights to the federal government of Nigeria in 1990. The mismanagement of the demands by the federal government, leading to further clampdown on human rights and the eventual hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his Ogoni kinsmen by the military junta of General Sanni Abaja, not only complicated the matter, but also deepened and broadened the spectre of agitation for environmental justice in the region.

The escalation of the agitations reached a frightening height with the Kaiama Declaration made by the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) ‘a confederation of youth associations of the Ijaw ethnic group of Rivers, Bayelsa, and Delta states of the Niger Delta, was formed in late 1998’ (Omotola, 2009: 136). Accordingly, the IYC affirmed unequivocally declared their ownership of all natural resources in Ijawland and readiness to assert their rights of such resources, using all legally permissible means. They therefore demanded for the immediate withdrawal of what they called “military forces of occupation” from Ijawland, and that “all oil companies stop all oil exploration and exploitation activities in Ijawland,” failure which would attract sanctions (Omotola, 2009; 2010a; Ikelegbe, 2005; Ukiwo, 2007). In addition to youth mobilisation, frequent protests and resistance of women are also notable in the region (Omotola, 2014).

Ever since 1998, the Niger Delta has been a theatre of conflicts and militancy, especially with the rise and proliferation of different militant groups. Notably, the region has witnessed three major waves of militancy. Between 1998 and 2009, the Egbesu Boys of Africa, the armed wing of the IYC, the Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Coalition for Militant Action (COMA), and a host of others (Watts, 2007; Omotola, 2009, 2010a, 2010b; Ebiefa, 2011). Following the amnesty offer of the federal government to the militants in 2009, some new militant groups emerged, mainly to protest the marginalisation of non-Ijaw ethnic youths in the juicy deradicalisation programme and security contract for ex-militants between 2009 and 2015. Prominent among these groups are the Urhobo Revolutionary Army (URA), the Liberation Movement of the Urhobo People (LIMUP), and the Urhobo Gbagbako.

The third phase of Niger Delta militancy emerged shortly after Goodluck Jonathan, a Nigerian President (2010–2015) from the Niger Delta, lost the 2015 election and his opponent, President Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023) threatened to end the amnesty programme. Between 2015 and 2016, the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), the Reformed Egbesu Boys of the Niger Delta (REBND), the Adaka Boro Avengers (ABV), the Joint Niger Delta Liberation Force (JNDLF), the Niger Delta Revolutionary Crusaders (NDRC) and the Niger Delta Greenland Justice Mandate (NDGJM) (Oyewole, 2018a; Onuoha, 2016).

At the heart of the rise and proliferations of militant groups in the Niger Delta region lies the vexatious issues of socioeconomic deprivation,

oppression, exploitation, marginalization, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, resources control, environmental degradation and state excesses in responding to the agitations for justice. The question of internal corruption among the power elite in the region has also added troubling twists and turns to the problems in the region (Aghalino, 2011; Onuoha, 2016). Among others, pervasive corruption in the region has not only deprived communities of needed amenities and infrastructure, but has also created an environment conducive to recruitment and radicalization of youth into militancy.

Nature and Manifestations of Kidnappings in the Niger Delta

Kidnapping in the Niger Delta region, in its current form and character, is relatively a recent phenomenon. It began as a negotiation strategy by militant youths in their agitations for an equitable share in oil revenue allocations from the Nigerian state and better community development engagements from the oil multinationals operating in the Delta in the 2000s (Sanyaolu, 2009; Akpan, 2010; Oyewole, 2016a).

Oil workers were/are usually the main target of kidnapping in the region, especially during its earliest phase in 2002–2008 (Albert et al. 2020). Victims were taken to oil flow stations and on their way to their project sites. However, with time the menace was extended to other targets such as construction workers on contracts with oil companies, state and federal government officials, security agents (military and police), as well as a crew of oil vessels along the Gulf of Guinea. Also included in the list of targets were politicians, relatives of top functionaries of companies and contractors, as well as the children of prominent individuals such as politicians. However, the ransoms charged at this moment were often modest and not difficult for the victims to pay. Also at that early stage, unlike the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the kidnappers and hostage takers in the Niger Delta hardly kill their victims. Victims were usually released immediately after the payment of the agreed ransom. However, there was a change of strategy with time. In recent times, many victims of kidnapping had been killed, some of them even after the payment of ransom (Oyewole, 2016a, 2018a; Eso, 2009). Albert et al. (2020: 215) traced the origin of kidnapping in the Niger Delta. According to them, the first major case of the kidnapping of foreign oil workers in the Niger Delta took place in April 2002 when some youths from Ekeremoh Local Government Area of Bayelsa State abducted 10 workers of the Shell Petroleum Development Company, for which the militants demanded and received a ransom of N3.1 million before releasing the expatriate oil workers to the former Governor of the state, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha. From this little beginning, kidnapping has extended to become a regular occurrence in the region. At this initial stage, as Albert et al. (2020) demonstrated, the militants were believed to be engaged in political kidnapping, with clarity about what the issues were beyond asking the oil companies to pay ransoms for the release of their staff. For them, therefore, the main goal of kidnapping at this point was more for raising money to continue the insurgency in the Niger Delta. The trend would soon change, especially from 2005 onward. As Albert et al. (2020: 215) document

However, the situation changed with time, especially from 2005 onward. During this period, the militants most especially members of the Martyr Brigade and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) began to use kidnapping and hostage taking to establish a bargaining position and to elicit publicity for getting Asari Dokubo, the leader of Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, the former Governor of Bayelsa out of jail. While Dokubo was detained for his leadership roles in the Niger Delta militancy, Alamieyeseigha was detained after he jumped bail in a London Court in 2005 on charges of money laundering; only to return home to be impeached from office in 2006 on charges of official corruption. It is not unlikely that the hostage crisis at this moment contributed to the eventual release of the two prominent Niger Deltans by the Federal Government in 2007.

The number of foreigners kidnapped for financial or political gain in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta area has exploded over the years. For instance, seven foreigners were reported kidnapped in 2005 (Inyang & Ubong, 2013; Oyewole, 2016a; Reuter, 2013). In 2006, that number grew to 72, and in 2007, it grew to 223 people, 26 of which were British citizens. Five of the 295 foreigners kidnapped in 2006 and 2007 died as a result of their kidnapping injuries, including a British citizen slain when the kidnappers' boat was attacked by the Nigerian Navy. Shortly after his release, one Syrian hostage died of disease (IMO, 2014; Reuter, 2009). The actions of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and other armed militant groups in the region have been blamed for the increase in kidnappings.

Table 5.1 gives a graphic representation of the menace of kidnapping in the Niger Delta. As the table reveals, kidnapping has become a major issue in the region,

Table 5.1 Selected kidnapping incidents in the Niger Delta

S. No.	Date	Description	Location
1	Jan. 2021–March 2023	Over 90 kidnapping incidents and more than 50 related fatalities	Rivers state
2	April 2023	A former president of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) kidnapped and two of his aides killed	East-West Road in Obio/Akpor LGA, Port Harcourt, Rivers state
3	April 2023	Three persons including a female Federal Commissioner were abducted	Ogbakiri Junction along the East-West Road in Emohua LGA. Rivers state
4	May 16, 2023	About 12 members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)	East-West Road in Rumuji town, Emohua LGA, Rivers state
5	Jan 2021–April 2023	More than 100 kidnapping incidents and over 50 kidnap-related fatalities	Edo state
6	Jan–June, 2022	More than 120 incidents of criminal violence including over 25 kidnapping incidents	Edo state
	July 2022	Twenty-eight fishermen were reportedly robbed and abducted by sea robbers who double as kidnappers	Along the Uruan Water Channel in Akwakpa community, Uruan LGA, Edo state

Table 5.1 (continued)

S. No.	Date	Description	Location
7	Jan–Sept 2022	More than 50 incidents of kidnapping and over 15 related fatalities	Cross River State
8	18 Nov, 2022	Gunmen reportedly abducted two medical doctors and two other residents along Calabar-Ikom Highway. The kidnappers demanded a 100 million naira ransom	Okomita community, Akamkpa LGA, Cross River state
9	Sept 12, 2022	Gunmen kidnapped the Vice-Chairman of the Isoko North LGA, Delta state	Kidnapped at Ogor town, Ughelli North LGA, Delta state
10	July 16, 2022	A senior official of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) Engr Kingsley Okorafor kidnapped	Umuadara Umulogho autonomous community, Imo State
11	14 July, 2022	Two foreign nationals kidnapped	Port Harcourt, Rivers state
12	Jan–July, 2020	Ninety-one sailors kidnapped	Niger Delta
13	Jan–Dec 2020	A record 130 crew members were kidnapped in 22 separate incidents	Niger Delta
14	Jan 2016—Sept 2020	Over 130 incidents of kidnapping	Delta state
15	April 28, 2019	Three oil workers were kidnapped: Canadian, Scottish, and Nigerian	Ogbele, Rivers state
16	April 2019	Two Royal Dutch Shell oil workers kidnapped/killed	Bayelsa state
17	Jan–Dec 2019	One hundred seventy-seven sailors kidnapped	Niger Delta
18	Oct 27, 2018	Eleven crew kidnapped by Gunmen, including eight Polish nationals	50 nautical miles off the coast of Nigeria
19	April, 2007	Militant group abducted six foreign oil workers in an attack on Tuesday	Penington River in southern Bayelsa state
20	Jan 19, 2018	Five oil workers kidnapped	Near Ajoki community, which borders Edo and Delta States
21	Jan–Dec 2018	One hundred fifty-six Sailors kidnapped	Niger Delta
22	Sept 27, 2010	Niger Delta gunmen kidnap 15 schoolchildren on bus. Demand £95,000 ransom	Abia state
23	Oct 17, 2017	Four British nationals kidnapped	Burutu area of Delta State
24	April 19, 2017	Gunmen killed three police escorts and abducted a local oil executive	Rumuokoro area of Port Harcourt
25	2017	Fifty-six seafarers kidnapped	Niger Delta

Sources: Compiled by the authors from various sources, including Niger Delta Weekly Conflict Update, a publication of the Foundation for Partnership Initiative in the Niger Delta (2023). Web Link: <https://pindfoundation.org/about-us/>; ICC Commercial Crimes Services (2023): <https://www.icc-ccs.org/>; Ship&Ports(2023): <https://shipsandports.com.ng/56-seafarers-kidnapped-niger-delta-2017/>; etc.

rising astronomically from its little beginning to a dreaded security and developmental albatross. The question then is: why the emergence and upsurge in kidnapping in the region? This is the concern of the next section.

Explaining Oil-Related Kidnapping in the Niger Delta

Many factors explain the rise and escalation of kidnapping in the Niger Delta. First and foremost, the history of the struggle for oil and environmental justice in the Niger Delta matters for our understanding of the rise and escalation of kidnapping in the region. The struggle requires a huge outlay of financial resources and strategies that could undermine the government at the center for effective prosecution. This consideration probably led to the resort to all sorts of criminal activities by various “liberation movements” in the region, including oil bunkering, illegal refineries, pipeline vandalization, and oil theft. For quite some time, the liberation movements would appear to be having some respite in terms of actualizing their dreams until the government, following a drastic reduction in oil revenues and foreign exchange earnings, decided to respond in a decisive manner. The escalation of government crackdowns on criminal “revenue generating activities” of liberation movements in the region, especially oil theft and oil bunkering, meant a drastic reduction in the revenue profiles of the militant groups (Omotola, 2010a; Oyewole et al., 2018). The search for alternative “revenue generating activities” by the militant groups, played a vital role in the recourse to kidnapping in the Niger Delta. As Bizley (2020), editor of *Oilfield Technology* puts it:

Since his election in May 2015, President Muhammadu Buhari’s crackdown on illicit refineries in the region has made it more difficult to process and sell stolen oil, dis-incentivizing pirates from hijacking vessels for their oil... the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps destroyed 106 illegal refineries in the Niger Delta in 2015, most of which were shut down since Buhari came to power.

Improved navy patrols and surveillance in the Niger Delta have also made it more difficult for criminal gangs to store and transport stolen crude, prompting many criminals to operate further out to sea. These surveillance activities do not, however, appear to have had a significant impact on the rate of kidnappings within the Niger Delta, which remains high. Depressed oil prices have also made the sale of stolen oil significantly less profitable than was previously the case.

It follows, by logical extension that the opportunities and incentives offered by kidnapping for revenue generation were also decisive in the resurgence of kidnapping in the region. This is not unconnected to the demand for and subsequent payment of ransom to secure the release of victims. To underscore the “business” dimension of kidnapping in Nigeria, a report by SB Morgen Intelligence stated that at least \$18.34 m was paid to kidnappers as ransom over a period of about 9 years between June 2011 and March 2020. Of this figure, the last four of the 9 years, specifically between January 2016 and March 2020, “accounted for the largest proportion with nearly \$11million exchanging hands between kidnappers and their

victims” (SBM Report, 2020: 4). While these figures represent the national aggregate for the period, Niger Delta may have accounted for a large chunk of the said amount for many reasons. Among others, the ransom often demanded the release of kidnapping victims in the Niger Delta is usually on the high side, not only because of the primary motivation for kidnapping as “a balancing act,” but more importantly, because the targets are in most cases, defined as “oil-related.” This point is understandable because, as the SBM Report indicates, Rivers state sits atop the list of the 10 top states affected by kidnapping in Nigeria during the period. Four other states from the Niger Delta, namely Delta, Bayelsa, Edo, and Ondo also ranked among the top ten in terms of kidnapping incidents in the country during the period, placing third, 4th, seventh, and eighth, respectively. Again, two of the highest amounts of ransom paid listed in the report were from the Niger Delta region. As the report puts it, “between the \$545,000 paid to secure the freedom of Ernest Ohunyon in Edo state in November 2011, and the \$6868 paid to free Ojo Ekundayo and Benjamin Iluyomade in Ondo state at the end of March 2020” (SBM Report, 2020: 4).

Kidnapping has also emerged, as a part of the opportunities and incentive, as a bargaining tool in the hands of the Niger Delta militants to force the government and oil multinationals to come to terms with certain strategic demands or concerns of the militants. Without any doubt, the history of militancy or dissent in the Niger Delta tells us many things. However, one thing that readily comes to mind here, which stands out clearly is the fact that the state has always demonstrated its total disapproval of dissents in the region. This is evident by the usually disproportionate responses of the state to dissent, a development aptly captured elsewhere as “state excesses” (Omotola, 2010a). These excesses, including arrests, torture, detention, prosecution, and in the extreme the execution of environmental and human rights activists in the region, notably the late Ken Saro-Wiwa of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), sent the signal to the militants about the need for alternative strategies that could force the hands of government into negotiation/dialogue. Kidnapping readily offers itself as one of such alternative strategies (Bizley 2020; Okoli, 2022).

The proliferation of non-state armed groups/militant groups in the Niger Delta has also contributed to rise and escalation of kidnapping in the region. However, such a resurgence is not unconnected to a deeper problem related to relative deprivation and rising discontent among the people of the region. Discontents revolve around issues of the deepening crisis and contradictions of oil and environmental politics in the region, including oil pollution, gas flaring and environmental degradation, excruciating poverty in the midst of plenty, rising youth unemployment, elite corruption, violation of human rights, and general underdevelopment (Aghedo, 2015; Ezirim, 2018; LaMonica and Omotola, 2014a; Omotola, 2006). The SBM Report (2020: 11) underscores the centrality of these issues when it notes that “rising levels of youth unemployment is a major factor responsible for the growth of kidnap cases. Nigeria’s unemployment rate rose from 18.8 percent in the third quarter of 2017 to 23.1 percent in the third quarter of 2018.” Though nationwide, the situation seems worse off in the Niger Delta. In fact, the region records some of the highest rates of unemployment in the country. According to the National Bureau of

Statistics (NBS, 2018), Akwa Ibom State reported the highest unemployment rate (37.7%), followed by Rivers State (36.4%), Bayelsa State (32.6%), and Abia (31.6%). This was before the advent of COVID-19, after which the Nigerian economy shrunk by about 34%. The import of this is that the unemployment situation in the region, like elsewhere in the country, may have worsened.

Yet, the inability of the state to decisively deal with the problem of kidnapping, not just in the Niger Delta, but also elsewhere across the country, has also contributed to its escalation. Until recently, very few cases of arrests of kidnappers were reported. Fewer of those numbers, if any, were prosecuted. There were unconfirmed reports of arrested kidnappers being set free based on “orders from the above.” Apart from the glaring lack of political will on the part of government, especially at the national level, there were also questions of inadequate capacities on the part of security agents, including acute shortage of adequate resources and gadgets, to effectively prosecute the war against kidnapping. As Okoli (2022) captures it, “the capacity of the state agencies to detect and deter crime is abysmal. In most instances, state security operatives fail to respond to occasions of kidnapping promptly and rapidly. They also lack the technical ability to track kidnappers and their movements.” The consequence, according to Okoli, is that “criminals carry on with impunity.” Once kidnappers, like other criminal networks, realize that the prospects of being arrested, prosecuted, and sentenced, that is, the risk factors, are lower than the opportunities and profits inherent in their activities, the likelihoods are that the criminals are motivated to continue to indulge in criminality.

Consequences of Kidnapping in the Niger Delta

Kidnapping in the Niger Delta has had a lot of negative consequences that reverberate beyond the region, affecting the state, economy, and society at various levels. For the Nigerian state, the inability of the state to effectively tame the monster of kidnapping exposes, quite worryingly, the inherent contradictions of Nigeria’s security architecture. Such a weakness, it would appear, tends to embolden criminal elements, in this case kidnappers, that they could continue their “business” with a potentially high success rate. Such a tendency may have accounted for the resurgence of the problem in the region and elsewhere in the country.

Logically, the success rate of kidnapping in the region has underlined the prospects of the crime as a lucrative business with high opportunities and incentives that are worth every risk. The huge amount of revenues generated from the payment of ransom has, unfortunately, continued to oil and revitalize the political economy of militancy and criminality in the region (see European Asylum Support Office, 2021). Oyewole (2016a, 196–198) documents the various amounts of ransoms paid in respect of some selected high-profile kidnappings in the region. Though concrete evidences are still sketchy or outrightly unavailable, there are possibilities, as in the case of terrorism financing, that such funds are being recycled into militancy in the region. The likelihood of such a possibility is hinged on the fact that the declining

revenue fortunes of militants, in the wake of the escalation of state attacks on the hitherto otherwise dominant modes of money-spinning criminal activities such as oil bunkering, illegal refineries and others, contributed to the gradual shift to and escalation of kidnapping in the region.

The resort to kidnapping has also had negative effects on the Niger Delta struggle itself. Among others, it reifies the age-long fear from official quarters that the whole idea behind the struggle for oil and environmental justice in the region is rooted in criminality. For the state officials, the government has done enough to address the contradictions of the region, including the establishment of development agencies, the creation of a separate ministry for the Niger Delta and lately, the Niger Delta Amnesty Programme, among others (Omotola, 2007, 2010b, Omotola and Patric, 2010). The resort to, and subsequent escalation of kidnapping in the region, despite these modest interventions, is considered as one of the clearest manifestations of the criminal intentions of the struggle *ab initio*. However, a much more worrisome effect of kidnapping on the Niger Delta is the increasing militarization of the region. All along, militancy of various strands has resulted in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region. Kidnapping only added some troubling twists and turns to the problem. The result is the increasing, militarization not just on the part of the state and security agents deployed to tame the monster, but also by the kidnapers themselves who have had to also deploy different kinds of weapons in the pursuit of their kidnapping business. Again, Oyewole (2016b, 2018b) documents in detail how the official response of the Nigerian state has been through increased security presence and various forms of security/military posts and operations in the region. These security responses have been shrouded in controversies and contradictions, including allegations of human rights violations and abuses such as extrajudicial killings, rape, and illegal arrests and torture (see also Albert et al., 2020; Alumona, 2016; Omotola, 2010a).

Kidnapping together with other criminal activities in the Niger Delta has also resulted in a huge loss of revenue to the Nigerian government. Specifically, because of attendant instability and security concerns generated by kidnapping, Nigeria earned the unenviable reputation of a high-risk investment location, leading to a situation whereby a number of countries such as the United States, Britain, and a few others had to issue travel warnings to their people at different times, advising their citizens against doing business in Nigeria (Abati, 2009). Moreover, militants' kidnapping has caused a halt in oil production, putting the Nigerian government in jeopardy of failing to meet its OPEC production limit and loss of revenue. In fact, the Federal Government, in the 2023–2035 Medium Term Expenditure Framework and Fiscal Strategy presented by the Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Dr. Zainab Ahmed, reveals that “Nigeria’s oil production slumped by 28 million barrels between January and July 2022, threatening the Federal Government’s N9.37tn oil and gas revenue target by the end of the year” (Quoted in Nnodim, et al., 2022: 1). Worse still, tens of thousands of Nigerian professionals have fled the nation owing to widespread insecurity and worries of victimization. In a similar line, several industries have closed as a result of insecurity in the Niger Delta region,

while others have gone to other clime that is relatively peaceful (Chinwokwu, 2013: 265).

The closure or relocation of oil and oil-related companies/businesses away from the Niger Delta to other parts of the country or even outside the country where the businesses considered safe and peaceful for their operations has also complicated the already terrible state of youth unemployment in the region. Several companies had to move their offices from Port Harcourt to Lagos. The insecurity also scares investors and expatriates, especially owing to their high economic value to kidnap gangs who see them as prime target. This situation implies that the casual jobs usually done by the host communities are no longer available thereby resulting in severe economic conditions for the members of the host communities (Albert, et al., 2020). Closely related to this, the profitable nature of kidnapping makes the crime hard to check, as its perpetrators would find it difficult to accept less lucrative jobs in the formal economy. Since kidnapping can make one an instant millionaire, the culture of hard work is seriously undermined. In addition to undermining diligence, it also serves to attract law-abiding citizens, especially the army of unemployed youths, into crime. This has dire implications for the psychology of the youth as they no longer wish to engage in gainful employment, they see kidnapping as the fastest means of becoming wealthy.

The spate of oil-related kidnappings in the Niger Delta region has continued to portray the image of Nigeria in the comity of the nation negatively. The unrelenting kidnapping calls to question the capacity of the country's security architecture in maintaining internal security. This has other implications, including loss of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) and declining international respectability and acceptability, including weakening Nigeria's chances of securing its much coveted African slot for the permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Conclusion and Way Forward

Although kidnapping is neither recent nor peculiar to Nigeria, an obvious lesson from this study is that it has had its origin in the Niger Delta as a negotiating strategy for the development of the region. As it unfolded, it got out of hand and has since become a national security challenge battling the Nigerian federation.

There is a need to review the current strategy for dealing with the issue of kidnapping and hostage taking in Nigeria. In particular, there is the need to explore the extant laws and the extent to which they are being enforced with a view to establishing their efficacy. The deplorable state of the entire Niger Delta region should attract a national emergency (LaMonica & Omotola, 2014b). The government should ensure the strict implementation of the Ogoni clean-up and other parts of the region that have suffered oil spillage and environmental degradation. Secondly, the government at all levels should make policies that will attract both local and foreign investors which will create employment opportunities for the youths, especially the vulnerable ones. Thirdly, there is a need to sensitize and engage members of the public by the

security agencies in tackling the issue of kidnapping and hostage taking. Fourthly, there should be proper protection of identities of the public members that supply useful information to the security agencies and officers and men of the security agencies. Last but not least, there is an urgent need to equip the security agencies with modern equipment and obsolete ones should be discarded and also ensure that enlistment into the security agencies is premised on merit but not by nepotism.

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Chapter 6

Boko Haram and Kidnapping in Nigeria



Rauf Tunde Sakariyau and Ismail Bello

Abstract The menace of kidnapping in Nigeria remains a disturbing phenomenon that threatens national security of the country. However, series of kidnappings of unarmed Nigerians have been adopted as tactics by the deadly Boko Haram terrorist group. This makes it imperative in this study to explore Boko Haram and kidnapping in Nigeria. With the adoption of failed state theory, it is inferred that the trend of kidnapping perpetrated by Boko Haram, Bandits and other unscrupulous elements places the country's security architecture on a verge of collapse and which invariably justifies the inability of the state to provide adequate security for the people. The study relies on secondary data. The findings of the study reveal kidnapping as a viable tactics adopted by the terrorist group to gain international attention. More so, it is an avenue to raise resources through payment of ransom by the families and concerned individuals and groups related or associated with the victims. This further showcases the government weaknesses to curb the proliferation of armed terrorist group in the country and by and large triggers trust deficit from the populace to the authority. The chapter suggests that despite aggressive military presence in the fight against insurgency and terrorism in the country, there is a need to intensify efforts to boost information and intelligence gathering mechanism. Similarly, government must ensure improvement of welfare services to the populace as a way of reducing prospective members of all forms of criminalities. Government reactiveness on security affairs cannot enhance a safer Nigeria. There is need for all tiers of government to be proactive in ensuring security of lives and properties.

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Introduction

The detonation of a bomb in a building near a flour company on July 25, 2009, in the capital city of Borno State, marked a watershed in the operation of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. This act of terrorism, which resulted in the arrest of some members of Boko Haram by the Nigerian Police Force, triggered public awareness of the intricacies of the Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, a group that is equally known as Boko Haram. Subsequently, after the arrest of their leader, there was an ugly face-off between the Boko Haram members and the Nigerian Police Force. Invariably, the face-off led to the burning of churches and government structures by members of the Boko Haram. In fact, the violent confrontational saga was purportedly planned by the Boko Haram members to free their detained leader, Yusuf Mohammed (Oriola, 2017).

The death of the sect leader, Yusuf Mohammed, in police custody marked the escalation of the Boko Haram destructive uprising attacks in the country. For instance, from 2009 to 2018, there have been over 10,000 deaths directly caused by Boko Haram while millions of people have been displaced, and violence by the militants and security remains a daily affair (Campbell and Harwood, 2018). The emergence of Abubakar Shekau, a second in command to Yusuf, in 2010 as a new leader of the group changed the dimension of volatility of the Boko Haram insurgency. In a video clip that went viral, Shekau threatened more havoc in a statement released to the journalists and said "jihad has begun" (Zenn, 2012). The speech of Shekau was not a mere statement as more damaging attacks have been executed with the use of highly sophisticated weapons since he assumed leadership. Similarly, the dynamics of the Boko Haram operation under Shekau showcased its international link with some foreign terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda. It is on record that Shekau reign masterminded the car suicide bombing attack on the UN Headquarters in Abuja in August 2011. This act reiterated Boko Haram's international connection. The momentum of the Boko Haram terrorist mission escalated in Nigeria, and the North Eastern region in particular, to the extent that more than 12 local governments were being controlled by the insurgents as of January 2015.

The year 2013 marked another milestone in Boko Haram tactics. Zenn and Pearson, 2014 noted that increased insurgent wave to embarking on series of kidnapping with women as the more vulnerable. Kidnapping became Boko Haram's major tactic and instrument of correspondence with the government since 2011. This dimension of the terrorist campaign does not come as a surprise, given how Abubakar Shekau had threatened to kidnap the wives of political leaders and other government officials as a response to the imprisonment of Boko Haram's wives (The Guardian, January 27, 2012). The implementation of the threat was the kidnapping of seven members of a French family in Northern Cameroon and bringing them back to Nigeria (The Guardian, April 19, 2013). This operation was carried out in February 2013 and henceforth, the replica informed a series of kidnapping in Nigeria. Between February to May 2013, the Boko Haram base in Maiduguri, Borno State, held captive 12 government officials. The assault of the insurgents was

extended to a police station in Bama and over 12 women including children were kidnapped (Zenn and Pearson, 2014).

The consolidation of Boko Haram kidnapping saga became more pronounced with the abduction of 276 schoolgirls from a public secondary school in the Chibok community of Borno State in April 2014. The kidnapping incidence attracted attention and many human rights organizations did not only condemn the action but also engaged the government on way forward to rescue the innocent girls. The government also engaged an international Private Military Contractor, Eeben Barlow, to support and partner with the Nigerian armed forces on a rescue mission for the Chibok girls (Aljazeera, January 6, 2020). Though a large number of the girls were later released by the government after years of captivity, the abduction of Dapchi schoolgirls was another tactic by Boko Haram to remain relevant and sustain reason to engage the government in dialogue. Despite prompt move that led to the release of the Dapchi girls, kidnapping has become an operational *modus operandi* of the Boko Haram terrorist organization.

It is against this background that it becomes imperative to explore the dynamics of Boko Haram's kidnapping strategy in Nigeria. The chapter is divided into six sections. Aside from the first section which provides background information on the subject matter, the conceptual clarification and literature review are captured in the second section. Theoretical postulation is considered in the third section, while the evolution of Boko Haram kidnapping is examined in the fourth section. The fifth section focuses on the effect of Boko Haram kidnapping on its terror campaign in Nigeria. The government reactions to Boko Haram Kidnapping tactics are analyzed in the sixth section, while the seventh section serves as the concluding part of this chapter.

Terrorism and Kidnapping: Reviewing Global Perspectives

The widespread nature of the activities of terrorism in contemporary societies makes it a disturbing global phenomenon. Terrorism is a deliberate and systematic application of violence to kill, destroy, and intimidate civilians to achieve a goal or draw attentions either domestic or international level. However, the global spate of terrorism has significantly affected different countries across the world. This has resulted in transnational political violence with several casualties that threatens peace in contemporary time. This perspective can be likened to what Okoli refers to as an unconventional method of political militancy. The justification here revolves around the political dimension of most terrorist attacks either domestic or international. Motivation for terrorism includes religion, economic, and social factors. Nevertheless, terrorist attacks are deliberately carried out to achieve maximum publicity. This assertion has been justified by a series of terrorist attacks globally. The Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Al-Shabab, Boko Haram destructive roles have made a series of international headlines. Given this, terrorism is synonymous with destruction and humiliation of innocent lives all in the name of ideological doctrine. The majority

of the terrorist groups justify their rebellion activities on socio-religious, economic, and political-ideological dichotomy. The present scenarios in Syria, Libya, and some other countries in Africa and the Middle East support this understanding of rebellion.

On the other hand, kidnapping simply connotes forceful abduction and holding persons to captivity against their will. Kidnapping as an unlawful act is a global virus that the perpetrators adopt to obtain a ransom (Maiangwa and Amao, 2015). Ransom, which is often in monetary terms, is usually used as an object of bargaining correspondence between the kidnappers and the relatives or associates of the captives. This dimension of kidnapping has attracted international attention, with records of cases in Europe, North America, South America, Asia, and Africa. This in the findings of Mike has made kidnapping to become a lucrative source of fund generation by criminal groups. The US Department of State as of 2012 estimated the number of kidnapped victims in Mexico to be 105,682 persons. This number skyrocketed to 131,946 in the following year. Similarly, the United States recorded roughly 460,000 missing children which have been attributed to kidnapping every year (National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, 2019). Given the lucrativeness of kidnapping, a mother in the United Kingdom, Karen Mathews, faked the kidnapping of her child. Though the action qualified her as the most hated British Mother in 2008, she was paid a ransom of 50,000 pounds to free the daughter, Shannon (The Sun, November 7, 2008).

The phenomenon of kidnapping as an avenue for monetary liquidity is supported by Okoli and Agada (2014) with their terminological illustration tagged “kidnap ransom value.” Their perception is that kidnappers target specific individual(s) based on financial worth. The underlying logic is to value the financial worth of the kidnapped person in order to determine ransom. This is done to ascertain the capacity of the victim to raise the minimum ransom. However, Zenn (2014) concurs with the application of kidnapping as a mechanism of generating money by the perpetrators, terrorist objective for kidnapping is beyond monetary gains. Kidnapping remains the easiest tactic to enhance correspondence with the government. Series of kidnapping cases by different terrorist groups have justified the claim that hostages are often employed by terrorists to pave the way for easy correspondence with the government (Zenn, 2014; Oriola, 2017).

Be that as it may, the linkage between terrorism and kidnapping has been established by various scholars and analysts (Habila, 2017; Dixon and Abubakar, 2016, Maiangwa and Agbiboa, 2014). The synergy of the two concepts reflects in the view of Blin and Challand (2005) that examine kidnapping as a strategy of terrorism. Terrorism as a professed idea requires kidnapping by way of hostility to pursue the agenda of the terrorist groups. This overview is central to the recruitment and survival of the terrorist group. Explaining the correlation between terrorism and kidnapping, Maiangwa and Amao (2015) asserted that kidnapped victims are used to aid the operations of the terrorists’ mission. Such results in the idea of “Gender Based Atrocities” where girls are kidnapped to serve domestic purposes while the males are recruited for battle and field operations. There have been instances where women voluntary involved in political terrorism like the case of Palestine, largely

female involvement in terrorism has been largely coercive. The Boko Haram insurgency adopts this strategy, as witnessed in the case of Chibok school girls and Dapchi kidnapping syndrome.

In the final analysis, despite divergent literary views on the typology and salient factors responsible for terrorism, it is observed that kidnapping remains one of the powerful tactics of terrorist organizations globally. The Boko Haram adoption of kidnapping was not a new trend in the global perspective of terrorism, the viability of this paper is anchored on the tactics and patterns of the insurgency using hostility as a formidable tool in its operation. This aspect remains the literature gap this chapter covers. To buttress this study, the theoretical postulation is captured in the next segment.

State Failure Theory

Recently, a growing number of states have witnessed several cases of violence which has disrupted socio-economic and political activities in the affected environs. In fact, the increase of crisis in some states has resulted in consistent political violence. The political unrest in Syria is more than a decade and yet, peace has eluded the country. It is not surprising that since the evolution of Boko Haram in Nigeria, the North East has yet to fully enjoy the peaceful atmosphere and millions of people remain homeless. The characteristics of Boko Haram attacks coupled with the level of sophisticated weapons used by the insurgents justify the attribute of “state failure” or “state collapse” as a theoretical discourse in this study. To simplify the component of state failure, Mark and Crawford (2002) identify impediments to growth in “third world countries” due to the absence of effective state institutions.

The basic assumption of the theory revolves around the state as the major provider of basic services and welfarism. Scholars such as William Zartman and Robert Rotberg considered a state as the foremost service provider. Meanwhile, “when the basic functions of the state are no longer performed,” it results in “state collapse” (Zartman, 2000). Invariably, a state has collapsed when it fails to provide its basic services. In a similar vein, the inability of a state to establish the attributes of statehood warrants the framework of “failed state.” This according to Rotberg (2004) is synonymous with failure of a state to provide political goods to its inhabitants. In this case, the security of lives and properties is fundamental to state survival.

The relevance of state failure theory to Nigeria’s security challenge is glaring with the reactive government responses to Boko Haram deadly attacks. The dynamics of the Boko Haram terrorist trend and the utilization of hostility as a mechanism to exploit correspondence with the state places Nigeria’s security structure on a failed note. As noted by Eriksen (2010), the failure of a state as a service provider particularly in the protection of lives and properties portends serious danger not only to the statehood but also to humanity. Though there are a variety of services required from a state—ranging from security, rule of law, and social services such as health education—the centrality of security to human survival cannot be

underestimated. The most fundamental service from a state is adequate security of life and property (Rotberg, 2004). This portends that the provision of security is a condition for other services mandated by the state.

Trend of Boko Haram Kidnapping

Terrorists since time immemorial have always used kidnapping among other tactics as an instrument of achieving a range of objectives. In recent history, in early twentieth-century Europe, ethnic separatists, revolutionists, nationalists, and other terror groups adopted kidnappings and abductions to achieve their political objectives. In the second half of the twentieth century, kidnapping was also conducted with skyjacking and hijackings of ships, which are mostly reported when targeted at Americans and Europeans (Morewitz, 2019; Radomyski and Bernat, 2018).

A number of research work has established a strong link between kidnapping and terrorism financing (Brisard, 2015; Giraldo and Trinkunas, 2007; O'Brien, 2012; Dutton, 2018; Rose, 2018; Enobi and Johnson-Rokosu, 2016; Prasad, 2016). Financing gives impetus to the operations of terrorists. The absence of adequate finance usually has direct implications on the logistics and welfare needs of the terror group. At inception, Boko Haram generated funds through the use of membership dues, this was complimented through funding from politicians in the North Eastern part of the country. It also received funds from Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) linked to Al-Qaeda. However, as some of these sources of funds dried up, the group resorted to criminality in order to achieve the dual objectives of funding their acts and also put pressure on the government to negotiate with the group in order to secure the release of its members arrested by the government forces. Kidnapping and abduction by the group have continued to provide the needed lifeline for their operations, especially with the decimation of their parent organizations in the Middle East.

Following the kidnapping of a French family of seven in Northern Cameroon, the group received \$3.15 million from Cameroonian and French negotiators for the release of the family in 2013. Since then, Boko Haram has gone on the rampage of kidnapping for ransom and terrorism. According to the United Nations Children Fund, Boko Haram has kidnapped and abducted over 1000 children mostly girls since 2013. Prominent among this abduction campaign was the Chibok girls and Dapchi School kidnapping of 276 and 110, respectively in 2014 and 2018 (Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021). The abduction of the school girls in Chibok marked Boko Haram's first major kidnapping campaign. This was pronounced because of the large scale of response from the international community and the high handiness of the Goodluck Jonathan administration. Table 6.1 gives a breakdown of the trends of kidnapping orchestrated by Boko Haram.

Table 6.1 Timeline of Boko Haram kidnapping and host taking

S. No.	Date	Victims	Location
1	February 19, 2013	Boko Haram took hostage a French family of seven in Cameroon	Cameroon
2	July 28, 2014	The wife of Amadou Ali, Cameroon's Vice Prime Minister	Cameroon
3	April 14, 2014	Boko Haram kidnapped more than 200 girls	Chibok, Borno State
4	August 11, 2014	Boko Haram kidnapped at least 97 men and boys and killed 28 people and injured 27 others, in a raid on villages in Borno state	Borno State
5	October 23, 2014	Suspected Boko Haram militants kidnapped at least 25 girls from a town in North Eastern Nigeria	Yola, Adamawa State
6	December 13, 2014	Boko Haram fighters kidnapped about 185 others in a remote farming village in North Eastern Nigeria called Gumsuri	Gumsuri Village, Borno State
7	December 18, 2014	Suspected Boko Haram kidnapped 172 women and children during a raid in North Eastern Nigeria	Borno State
8	December 31, 2014:	Gunmen suspected of belonging to Boko Haram kidnapped 40 young men and boys, mostly aged between 15 and 23 years, from the village of Malari in northeastern Nigeria	Malari Village Borno State
9	January 18, 2015	Suspected Boko Haram militants kidnapped an estimated 80 people in Northern Cameroon	Cameroon
10	February 9, 2015	Boko Haram militants hijacked a bus in the North of Cameroon, kidnapping as many as 30 civilians	Cameroon
11	November 2016	Boko Haram kidnapped approximately 400 women and children, including at least 300 elementary school students, in the town of Damasak. The incident received little media attention until Human Rights Watch published an investigation into the incident in March 2016	Damasak, Borno State
12	March 31, 2017	Boko Haram militants kidnapped 22 girls and women in two separate raids in North East Nigeria. They also killed a herdsman who refused to pay a protection fee	Pulka Village, Borno State
13	March 2, 2018:	Three aid (International Committee for the Red Cross) workers were killed in Rann, North East of Maiduguri in Borno state, and another three were kidnapped. Two of the three were later executed (Saifura Hussaini, Ahmed Khorsa, and abducted midwife Hauwa Mohammed Liman were executed)	Maiduguri, Borno State
14	April 2, 2017	18 girls aged below 17 years were kidnapped in Pulka Village and 4 girls in Dumba village in Borno State	Borno State.
15	September 6, 2018	Boko Haram attacked a civilian convoy near the town of Gwoza, Borno state, killed 2 persons and kidnapped 25 people	Gwoza Borno State
16	December 22, 2019	Boko Haram Kidnapped 5 Aid Workers "Two of the abductees were staff of ALIMA, an international NGO; one from Solidarity International, one from International Organization on Migration and one from Red Cross"	Damaturu, Yobe State

Compiled by Authors

One of the brazen kidnapping campaigns carried out by Boko Haram was the abduction of students of Government Secondary School Chibok, Maiduguri State. This abduction drew national and international outrage. Table 6.2 summarizes the timeline of Chibok abduction saga.

Table 6.2 Timeline of Chibok girls kidnapping

Date	
April 14/15, 2014	Boko Haram fighters attacked the Government Secondary School Chibok, abducting 276 schoolgirls from their dormitories.
April 14/15, 2014	57 of the girls escaped by jumping off the Boko Haram trucks in which they were being transported.
May 12, 2014	Boko Haram released a video showing many of the abducted girls covered in hijab from head to toe and chanting Arabic verses.
April 14, 2016:	Boko Haram released another video showing 15 of the Chibok girls looking robust and well-fed.
May 17, 2016:	One of the girls, Amina Ali Nkeki, was rescued by members of the Civilian Joint Task Force, alongside her 6-month-old baby.
August 14, 2016	Another video surfaced on the Internet showing some of the Chibok girls, many of them carrying a baby. A masked man who spoke in the video reiterated Boko Haram's demands for the release of some of their fighters in return for the girls. He also said many of the girls had died in airstrikes carried out by the Nigeria Air Force.
October 13, 2016	Twenty-one of the Chibok girls were released following a deal believed to have been brokered by the Swizz government and the International Committee of the Red Cross.
November 5, 2016	One other Chibok girl was discovered among several dozens of women who had been rescued by soldiers during a raid on a Boko Haram position. Maryam Ali-Maiyanga (the name of the girl) was also found with a little baby who was just about 6 months old.
January 2, 2017	Another Chibok girl, Rakiya Abubakar, was rescued in a similar circumstance as Maiyanga.
May 6, 2017	The greatest breakthrough was recorded with the return of 82 of the abducted girls, again, thanks to the government of Switzerland and the international NGO, the Red Cross. 83 girls were supposed to have been released, according to a government spokesperson, but one opted out of the deal, choosing to remain with her husband. However, reports said that the Nigerian government paid a ransom of three million Euros, as well as released five top Boko Haram fighters, to secure the girls' release; a claim FG has consistently denied.
January 4, 2018	Nigerian Army announced the rescue of yet another Chbok girl, Salomi Pogu, alongside another young girl whose name was given as Jamila Adams but who was not among the girls abducted from GSS Chibok in 2014.

Source: Obiejesi (2019)

Effect of Boko Haram Kidnapping on Terror Campaign in Nigeria

Victims and Characters of Operations

It is important to state that Boko Haram is not a local terrorist group, it has affiliation with Al-Qaeda and Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, among other terrorist groups. Hence, these groups have a greater influence on Boko Haram in the area of tactical knowledge toward surviving attacks from the government security forces. Thus, the resort to kidnapping of mostly school girls was a strategic mechanism to serve as human shields used in preventing the military superior airpower and outright bombing of their camps became imperative for the insurgents.

The majority of Boko Haram's victims are usually women and children. The group has gained notoriety for the abduction of young girls of school going age. This is because of the weakness of this category of people and in most cases, they are used as sexual slaves, raped, and in some cases used as suicide bombers. In fact, there are reported cases of kidnapped school girls being used as suicide bombers (Botha, 2019). With the rise of Boko Haram terrorism, Nigeria reportedly accounts for 73 percent of all cases of female suicide bombing globally between 2014 and 2017 (Amusan et al., 2019). Some women folk are also abducted for the purpose of generating finance. Families or workplaces of women kidnapped are sometimes forced to pay ransom to the insurgents.

As stated earlier, the kidnapping of women and girls became pronounced in 2014 with the Chibok incident. There is a general consensus among scholars such as Okolie-Osemene and Okolie-Osemene (2019), Botha (2019), Onuoha and Oyewole (2018), that the women folk are subjected to abduction because of their weak nature which makes it easy for indoctrination, usage as suicide bombers, forced into marriage with the group commanders in order to satisfy their sexual urge and usage of women as spies to gather intelligence. The usage of the women folk by the insurgents has had a consequential effect on them in the society. Women are usually subjected to human rights abuses, stigmatization by community members if eventually released or rescued and unwanted children among others (Oriola, 2017).

Apart from women folk, in general, expatriates and foreigners working in the Lake Chad region have come under attack from Boko Haram. This group of individuals serves as one of the most important sources of funding for the insurgents. A French family of seven on vacation in Cameroon was abducted and eventually released after the payment of a ransom of \$3.15 million. Similarly, a Canadian and two Italian priests were kidnapped in Maroua, Cameroon and taken to Nigeria, but were eventually released to Cameroonian authorities, it was however unclear if ransom was paid as the Cameroonian authorities were salient on this. Another high case was the abduction of ten Chinese workers from a site in Waza Northwest Cameroon just across the border from Chibok, this resulted in the death of a soldier during the attack. The Chinese were eventually released after negotiation with the terror group which saw President Biya personally involved in their release, as with

other cases of abduction parties declined to state if a ransom was paid for the release (Waddington, 2014; Onuoha, 2014).

Tactics of Engagement in Hostage Situations

Apart from financing, Boko Haram has now mastered the use of abductions of women and children as a means of hostage negotiation and prisoner exchange. According to Maiangwa and Agbiboa (2014), Boko Haram's hostage situation especially the kidnapping of women and girls started as a response to the Nigerian state detaining of wives and children of group leaders in order to force them to the negotiating table and also coerce them to renounce the terror group. In January 2012, Abubakar Shekau, stated that the group would commence the abduction of wives of government officials, in his words "[S]ince you are now holding our women, just wait and see what will happen to your own women... to your own wives according to Sharia law" (Pearson and Zenn, 2014).

In addition to the response to the Nigerian government's detaining of their women, Boko Haram has mastered the usage of a hostage situation as a valuable bargaining mechanism to secure the release of the group's high profile commanders who have been detained by the Nigerian government as a result of the anti-terror campaign. In 2012, following the kidnapping of Chris McManus a British contract worker with construction giant, B Stabilini in the Birnin Kebbi area of Kebbi State, Northwest Nigeria. Boko Haram requested the release of prisoners, however, they kept changing the specific prisoner they wanted to be released. An attempt by the Nigerian Army with support from the British Special Boat Service (SBS) to rescue the British hostage and his co-worker, Franco Lamolinara; an Italian, resulted in their execution by their abductors. The discovery of the presence of the British SBS meant the hostages were about to be rescued, hence the invocation of the orders to kill the hostages if there were an attempt to free them (Zenn, 2012; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019).

Similarly, a German engineer abducted in Kano same Northwestern Nigeria was killed in a failed rescue attempt by the Nigerian security forces in January 2012. In Bauchi state, northeastern Nigeria, seven foreigners kidnapped from a construction site were also killed on March 09, 2013 (Cunningham, 2017). This trend shows the dicey situation in hostage negotiation and rescue efforts by the Nigerian security forces assisted in some situations by foreign military. It also points to the fact that the terror group uses the killing of the foreign abductees to send a clear message to the Nigerian government that in the event of a rescue operation the abductees will be executed and this spells a bad name for Nigeria and also for the country to be viewed as ineptitude when it comes to managing security challenges. Invariably, this in the long run affects the country's economy.

It is also worthy of note to state that these terror groups establish strong links of cooperation in order to cover their tracks and also force the Nigerian side to the negotiating table either to get needed cash for their operations or release their top

commanders. Boko Haram has continued to cooperate with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in order to move abductees from Nigeria to other countries in the Sahel region or vice versa. This makes it difficult for the government to effectively ensure the release of the abductees. As stated by Cunningham (2017), AQIM has continued to use Boko Haram and other splinter groups (ANSARU) in the country to take advantage of the presence of expatriates by abducting them and handing over the abductees to AQIM operatives in the Sahel and in return the group in Nigeria is provided with sophisticated arms, money and training. The transnational nature of the Boko Haram hostage situation was made easy due to the large swath of ungoverned spaces between these countries in West Africa and the Sahel. Also, grievances around French intervention in Mali further cemented the collaboration between Boko Haram and the AQIM, this was evident in the kidnapping of French family of seven in Cameroon by Boko Haram.

Nigeria's Government Response to Boko Haram Kidnapping Campaign

The response from the Nigerian government has been mixed. In some instances, the government negotiated with the terrorist group, which usually led to the exchange of prisoners mainly Boko haram leaders. The government has also been accused of silence, nonchalant attitude, and ineffective response. Nevertheless, there has always been a response from the government either proactive or reactive.

There is also the military component of government response which is usually in the form of the rescue of kidnapped victims. In 2018, the Nigerian army in collaboration with the Multinational Joint Taskforce of Cameroonian and Nigerian troops rescued over 1000 Boko haram captives which were mainly women and children from Amchaka, Malamkari, Gora, Walasa village in Bama Area of Borno State, Nigeria (Okolie-Osemene and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; CNN Library, 2019; Botha, 2019). However, this component has not been very effective due to corruption in the larger polity and the military. As a result of corruption, the military is starved of modern military hardware and intelligence to effectively rescue kidnapped or abducted Boko haram victims.

The glaring inability of the government to put a stop to Boko Haram kidnappings and abductions has questioned the sincerity and ability of the ruling class to stop the ugly incidents. Prior to the administration of President Buhari, President Goodluck Jonathan considered the talks and amnesty to the insurgents, this was in line with the recommendations of the Usman Galtimari committee on ending Boko Haram violence. In March 2018, President Muhammad Buhari's administration proposed a sort of amnesty to the group where he declared that "government is ever ready to accept the unconditional laying down of arms by any member of the Boko Haram group who shows strong commitment in that regard" and this was later confirmed by the Minister of Information, Lai Mohammed, who stated that "unknown to many,

we have been in wider cessation-of-hostility talks with the insurgents for some time now.” The offers to the insurgents were not offered out of context. This was in the aftermath of the February kidnapping of 111 school girls from Government Girls’ Science and Technical College, Dapchi, Yobe State, North Eastern, Nigeria. Although, the girls were eventually released in March 2018, with Leah Sharibu held captive while five of the girls died during the ordeal. It is worthy of note that the reasons for release are still subject to speculations, as the government has not confirmed or denied paying the ransom (Nwammuo and Salawu, 2018; Thurston, 2018).

Due to the increasing tenacity of Boko Haram and the glaring incapacity of the government to tackle the insurgency and by extension tackle the issue of abduction and kidnapping, it has been left with no other option than to offer the group some sort of amnesty in exchange for them to lay down their arms and embrace. Due to split with Boko Haram (Islamic State in the West Africa Province (ISWAP)- led by Abu Musab al-Barnawi, Jamā’atu Anṣārīl Muslimīna fī Bilādis Sūdān(ANSARU)- led by Abubakar Adam Kamar, alias Abu Yasir, Jamaat Ahlal-Sunnali- Dawawal-Jihad (Mainstream Boko Haram) Abubakar bin Mohammed alias AbubakarShekau).

Conclusion

The dynamics of Boko Haram tactics in its operational activities remain a greater concern among scholars and analysts of security studies. However, as discussed in this paper, kidnapping has been explored by the Boko Haram insurgent group not only to gain correspondence with the authority but to also use it as an avenue to generate income. This indicates the level of security lapses that pave the way for a continuous escalation of the Boko Haram insurgency. In lieu of this, it is recommended that Nigeria’s military architecture requires more strategic and intelligence gathering to succeed in neutralizing the terrorist group. In addition, the government needs stronger political will for sincere flushing out of any security threat sects in the country. Nevertheless, the battle for safety, particularly against terrorism should be the responsibility of all (rulers and the ruled). The former needs to be proactive rather than being reactive while the latter could boost and facilitate winning the terrors via information dissemination to the appropriate security outlets and community leaders.

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Chapter 7

Armed Banditry and Kidnapping in Nigeria



Talabi Rasheed Ayegbusi

Abstract Kidnapping has become a major security issue in Nigeria, with reported cases in every part of the country in recent years. The interplay between armed banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria is the focus of this chapter. It critically explores how armed banditry continues to be one of the leading causes of Nigeria's escalating kidnapping trend and examines the motivation for kidnapping by armed bandits. It dwells on the changing tactics and characters of kidnapping by armed bandits, its consequences, and state responses to kidnapping by armed bandits. While kidnapping is motivated by various factors, economic motivation is at the heart of kidnapping by bandits. The chapter argues that bandit kidnapping has negatively impacted national security, food security, education, and economic sectors. It has also fueled humanitarian crises and nutritional inadequacy. In response, the states (both federal and state governments) have undertaken a variety of control mechanisms, in addition to military actions. Though security operations against armed bandits are necessary to reduce kidnappings and banditry in Nigeria, they may not provide long-term security. There is an urgent need to strive towards a coordinated and collaborative approach to prevent bandits from escalating further.

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Introduction

Nations are facing a lot of new and complex threats, agitations, and challenges at the same time, including an unprecedented rise in international terrorism, ecological disasters caused by climate change, pandemics, large-scale organised crime, insurgency, colossal human displacements resulting in an unusual population upsurge across borders, and severe humanitarian crisis (Adebisi, 2013). Often, huge capital, material, and human resources are expended by governments to secure their countries from internal violence and external threats (Idowu, 2012). In Nigeria, the return to democracy in May 1999 was greeted with great hope and expectations of development and political stability. However, the last decade has experienced increased violent conflicts and criminality (Olaniyan and Omotola, 2015; Abdul et al., 2018) that are undermining those expectations. The violent conflicts and crimes include armed robbery, drug trafficking, human trafficking, kidnapping, arms smuggling, militancy, and armed banditry (Onuoha, 2014; Adewoyin and David, 2019; Tar and Safana, 2021).

The scourge of violence has recently taken a toll on Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, each characterised by a distinct type of crime, all of which have impacted the development of all regions (Tahir and Bernard, 2021). Banditry is one of the most severe threats to Nigeria's current national security, due to its devastating consequences in many sections of the country, over the years (Kuna and Ibrahim, 2015). As the hallmark of Nigeria's beleaguered national security, the phenomenon has successfully contended alongside insurgency and militancy. Like the Boko Haram insurgency, banditry has had disastrous humanitarian effects in northern Nigeria and beyond. It has evolved into an aggravated national security quandary that can be accurately described as a crime–terror convolution, working hand in hand with insurgency (Goodluck Jonathan Foundation, 2021).

Recently, kidnapping has become the most prevalent and pervasive manifestation of banditry in Nigeria, surpassing cattle rustling, armed robbery, and criminal raids. There is not a single corner of the country that has not witnessed armed banditry and kidnapping in recent years, and what is more worrisome is that there does not seem to be a concerted effort to put an end to it soon (Torkwembe, 2020). On 26 November 2021, following an *ex parte* motion filed by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) through the Federal Ministry of Justice, an Abuja Division of the Federal High Court declared bandit organisations to be terrorists (Nnochiri, 2021). The FGN had to wait more than a month after the verdict for the court ruling to be officially gazetted on 5 January 2022 (Nnochiri, 2022). However, it is worrisome that, despite this declaration, bandits are still very active in their violent acts, including kidnapping (Umoru and Agbakwuru, 2022).

The main objective of this chapter is to critically examine how armed banditry continues to be one of the leading causes of Nigeria's escalating kidnapping trend and explore the motivation for kidnapping by armed bandits. It dwells on the changing tactics and characters of kidnapping by armed bandits, its consequences, and state responses to kidnapping by armed bandits. The central argument of this

chapter is that the motive may vary from country to country; kidnapping is as old as the world itself. However, the first recorded kidnapping case in Nigeria occurred in 2006, when the militants of the Niger Delta fighting for a better share of oil money blew up pipelines and kidnapped international oil workers on a regular basis. With the mass abduction of people by armed bandits, kidnapping has become a major threat to Nigeria's national security. The chapter illustrates this and the related nexus between armed banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria.

The conceptual frameworks that guide the analyses are established in the first section. It explores various perspectives on banditry, concentrating on the varied perceptions offered by various scholars. It also examines the concept of kidnapping before showing how armed banditry and kidnapping are linked. The second puts the problem in a historical context, demonstrating how armed banditry evolved and giving the background to kidnapping by armed bandits in Nigeria. The third reflects on the motivating factors of kidnapping by armed bandits and the various tactics adopted by the armed bandits. The fourth explores the impact of armed bandit kidnappings on Nigeria's development. The fifth interrogates state responses to kidnapping by armed bandits. The concluding section synthesises the main arguments and identifies policy options.

Clarification of Concepts

The frame of reference for this research primarily comprised two key concepts: banditry and kidnapping. These concepts are examined from both a contextual and operational standpoint. After that, the nexus between the two is explored.

Armed Banditry

As observed by Fernand Braudel (1972, 1:102), 'banditry' was 'an ill-defined word if ever there was one'. His view has later been confirmed by debate. Banditry's definition has evolved across time, space, and circumstances. In nineteenth-century Europe and the Americas, a bandit was seen as a freedom fighter whose goal was to ensure the emancipation of the oppressed from the upper class or the colonised from the coloniser. On the other hand, a bandit in a traditional African setting is quite different from one in the Americas or Europe, as the former major in armed robbery and other associated crimes (Adebola and Oluwatoyin, 2022).

Hobsbawm (1974) and others (Joseph, 1990) look at banditry from populist-romantic perspectives. They viewed banditry as an expression of 'pre-political sentiments and a desire for a just world' (Cassia, 2000, p. 65). On the other hand, the radical empiricist revisionists (Blok 1972; Vanderwood, 1992; Driessen, 1983; Hart, 1987; Slatta, 1991) see it as 'collectively, politically repressive and individually interested' (Cassia, 2000, p. 65). Taking on a statist definition, Cassia thinks

banditry to be consistent, relatively long-term flouting of the state's laws by groups of individuals (2000, p. 67). According to Okoli and Okpaleke (2014a), banditry refers to armed robbery and related violent crimes, such as kidnapping, cattle rustling, and raids on villages or communities. Banditry as an act involves using force, including the fear of death, to frighten people to rob, rape, or kill them. Abdulrasheed (2021) defines armed banditry as the practice of raiding and attacking victims by members of an armed organisation, whether deliberate or not, using weapons of offence or defence, particularly in semi-organised groups, with the intention of overcoming the victim and collecting plunder or attaining political goals.

In the literature, various types of banditry have been identified depending on the underlying 'motive' or 'location' or 'operational mode' or 'formation' or 'agency'. There is banditry that is primarily driven by 'social' or 'political' or 'economic' considerations. Social banditry is motivated by a desire to protest social inequity and redistribute wealth within a community (Hobsbawm, 1974; Franks, 1995). Hobsbawm proposed the concept decades ago in his famous study of rural revolt (Hobsbawm, 1974). Political banditry, unlike social banditry, has distinct partisan (rather than class) preferences. Unlike pre-political social bandits, political bandits are aware of and committed to a wider political movement (Slatta, 1991). Political banditry is visible in Gonzalo Sanchez and Donny Meertens' studies of Colombian *Violencia* and Lewis Taylor's analysis of early twentieth-century Cajamarca. On the other hand, economic banditry is driven by the need for material acquisition (Okoli and Ugwu, 2019).

When the underlying index is 'place' of occurrence, one can speak of 'rural vs urban banditry' or 'frontier vs countryside banditry' or maritime vs coastal vs mainland as the case may be. According to Okoli and Okpaleke (2014b), rural banditry refers to armed violence carried out in the countryside and at country borders by criminal opportunists and syndicates. Katumanga (2005) refers to urban banditry as the unrestrained use of coercive instruments by the ruling class and various sections within the population in order to enable the acquisition of economic benefits and political power. 'Maritime banditry' denotes offshore robbery (piracy) as opposed to those that occur on the coast or the mainland. Okoli and Ugwu (2019) posited that banditry could be 'mercenary' or 'autonomous' depending on how the role of 'agency' is portrayed. Mercenary banditry is carried out by foot soldiers working for a superior in a principal-agent relationship, whereas autonomous bandits are self-commissioned. Subject to form and formation, banditry can be 'organised' or 'petty'. 'Organised banditry' survives on a syndicated and coordinated network of actors, whereas 'petty banditry' is perpetrated by unorganised individuals or groups. Suppose operational mode is used as the basis of the typological index. In that case, banditry can be 'stationary' or 'roving'. Stationary bandits are settled or sedentary, whereas 'roving bandits' are more or less nomadic or itinerant.

Kidnapping

Kidnapping is a restriction of someone else's liberty that breaches the fundamental principle of freedom of movement, which is established in the Federal Republic of Nigeria's constitution. In the extant literature, kidnapping has been subjected to different definitions varying from one state to another and from one jurisdiction to another. According to Walsh and Adrian (1983), the term is ambiguous and lacks a clear definition. It is contingent on who defines it, from what perspective, and for what purpose. Section 364, Chapter 31, of the Nigerian Criminal Code Act of 1990 described kidnapping as 'unlawfully imprisons any person, and takes him [or her] out of Nigeria without his [or her] consent' or 'unlawfully imprisons any person within Nigeria in such a manner as to prevent him [or her] from applying to a court for his [or her] release or from discovering to any other person the place where he [or she] is imprisoned, or in such a manner as to prevent any person entitled to have access to him [or her] from discovering the place where he [or she] is imprisoned'. As a result, kidnapping is a serious crime that makes the offender liable to imprisonment for 10 years.

According to British criminal law, kidnapping is defined as the 'taking or carrying away of one person by another, by force or fraud, without the consent of the person taken or carried away and without lawful excuse. It must involve an attack on or loss of that person's liberty' (cited in Newiss, 2017). Similarly, in US federal and state law, kidnapping is generally defined as the unlawful taking of a person from one location to another or the confinement of a person to a restricted environment (cited in Tazzioli and De Genova, 2020). In the United Nations Statistical yearbook, kidnapping means unlawfully detaining a person or persons against their will (including through the use of force, threat, fraud, or enticement) for the purpose of demanding for their liberation an illicit gain or any other economic gain or other material benefit, or in order to oblige someone to do or not to do something and 'excludes disputes over child custody' (UNDESA, 2017).

In general, kidnapping is an aggravated kind of false imprisonment in which a person is not only deprived of his liberty but also taken (abducted) to another location. Some kidnapping laws require that the kidnapping or detention must be for an 'unlawful' reason, such as extortion. Obviously, all forms of incarceration or detention involve some of the defining features of kidnapping. The only distinction between the crime of kidnapping and the state practices of coercively taking a person into custody, spatially and temporally confining him or her, and depriving him or her of his or her liberty is the distinction regarding what is a 'lawful' rather than an 'unlawful' purpose. In sum, in its most basic form, kidnapping consists of (i) an unlawful detention and (ii) an unlawful asportation. These are the distinctive characteristics of kidnapping.

Armed Banditry and Kidnapping Nexus

Historically, relationship has always existed between banditry and kidnapping. In 1856, Edmond About wrote *Le Roi des Montagnes*, a satirical story about a Greek bandit leader who kidnaps some Europeans on a tour of classical monuments. In Nigeria, kidnapping by bandits is among the biggest organised or gang crime and a national security challenge. Extant literature on armed banditry in Nigeria, specifically northern Nigeria, has established a connection between armed banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria (Okoli, 2021; Rufa'i, 2021). In light of this, Egwu (2016, p. 15) contends that 'rural banditry is accompanied by rape, kidnapping, organised attacks on villages and communities, and looting.' To Mohammed and Alimba (2016), depredations, cattle rustling, armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, and unlawful toll collecting at village markets are all common features of banditry. In his study of the impact of terrorism, banditry, and kidnapping on human security in Nigeria, Dami (2021) concludes that there are few differences between terrorists, bandits, and kidnappers because one set of activities appears to serve the other. The preceding shows that armed bandits are mostly linked to mass killings of unarmed civilians, cattle rustling, kidnapping, and other human rights violations.

Historical Perspectives on Banditry and Kidnapping in Nigeria

Banditry has a long history that can be traced all the way back to ancient Greece, Rome, and China, when bandits riding primarily on horseback moved from their hideouts to attack communities and then fled to their hideouts. In Europe, banditry has been reported in the hilly regions of Italy, Spain, Greece, and Turkey throughout Europe (Dodds, 2012; Cayli, 2017). Acts of banditry were experienced in Iran, the Philippines, and India, among other Asian countries (Bankoff, 1998; Cronin, 2016). Armed banditry is one of the leading Africa's security challenges. It continued to wreak havoc on the Horn of Africa, East and Central Africa, and trans-Saharan trade routes between Niger and Libya (Mburu, 1999; Osamba, 2000). Bandits have existed in parts of Chad and near Lake Chad, and they are also common in parts of southern Africa (Issa, 2004; Van Onselen, 2010; Aregbesola, 2020). The prevalence and severity of banditry in West Africa have contributed to a rise in regional instability, posing a threat to the subregion's regional integration (Abdullahi, 2019).

In Nigeria, it is worth mentioning that there were documented cases of banditry in the pre-colonial period. This is referred to as 'old banditry' or 'traditional banditry' by Blumell (2007). For instance, Akinwumi (2001) in *Princes as highwaymen* explores the phenomenon of armed banditry in pre-colonial Borgu history. He sees armed banditry in Borgu as a reaction to the fifteenth-century shift from agrarianism to mercantilism. In his study of the attraction of child slaves and their ways of captivity in the eighteenth century, Ojo (2012) also argues that the most common

sources of slaves, including children, were warfare, raids, banditry, indebtedness, kidnapping, betrayal, crime, ritual punishments, unwed birth (bastards), and second-generation (home-born) enslaved people. Explaining further, he submits as follows:

In the Egba-Yoruba area, during the confusion following the fall of Egba towns and relocation to Abeokuta, bandits periodically staged masquerade displays for the purpose of luring children into the bushes, where they were seized and sold. Such practices remained popular until the 1840s when Egba authorities passed a law punishing the kidnapping of fellow citizens with death. (Ojo, 2012, p. 422)

In his decade of research in Zamfara bandit's den, Rufa'i (2021) argues that banditry is not a new phenomenon in the Zamfara region, as it has a long history there. As stated by him, oral historians and traditional praise singers talk over how the bandits' activities influenced trade and other economic interests in the pre-colonial period. Around 1891, some traditional rulers in the Dan-Sadau region were alleged of collaborating with bandits in armed robbery and cattle rustling (Rufa'i, 2021).

Similarly, in colonial Nigeria, there were documented cases of banditry. Historicising this, Prof. Abubakar Liman puts it thus:

In those days, wayfarers and merchants traveling along our local economic roads usually faced the threats and dangers of ambush from nondescript bandits. Armed bandits and criminals were known to be targeting goods ferried on the back of donkeys, camels, and ox carts. Those bandits on our trade routes would forcefully take those goods and disappear into the bush. That is just one dimension of the problem then. In other instances, the bandits would sometimes raid farming communities and villages with the intent of willful killing and wanton destruction of property. During such raids, the bandits would destroy virtually everything in their path, including valuables, farm produce, etc. This subculture has been in existence even before the coming of colonialists to the territories of northern Nigeria. (Jaafar, 2018, para 2)

During the period, the northern region experienced a situation in which bandits murdered 210 traders and stole £165,000:00 worth of products. According to reports, the attack took place in the Zamfara axis, targeting Kano residents on their route to French territory. As far back as 1911, the persistent harassment, intimidation, and raids on herders and traders occurred unabated near Kwotarkwashi (Rufa'i, 2021).

This trend persisted in the post-colonial period, resurfacing in various forms; succeeding governments have had to deal with variations on armed banditries. In *this Present Darkness: A History of Nigerian Organized Crime*, Nigerian post-independence banditry, according to Stephen Ellis (2016), may be traced back to the period just before the civil war, when the administration in some parts of the Western Region fell apart, and the distinction between political violence, crime, and organised insurgency became unclear. Gowon's military regime failed to manage demobilisation at the end of the war. Banditry became enticing as demobilised combatants returned home with nothing to do.

Armed robbery was an early manifestation of urban banditry in southern Nigeria. Ishola Oyenusi, who terrorised Lagos towards the end of the Civil War, was an early example of this. Urban robbery was not limited to southern Nigeria. In April 1970, three armed men robbed a bank of £27,750 in Kano. Between 1984 and 1996, drug

trafficking developed as another dimension of banditry in Nigeria. Subsequent decades seemed to see an increase in urban banditry in various sections of southern Nigeria. In the 1980s, the poster boy was Lawrence Anini who mixed indiscriminate brutality with a dash of Robin Hood while advocating for the oppressed (Odinkalu, 2018). Shina Rambo terrorised parts of southwest Nigeria in the 1990s with antics similar to Anini's. The Otokoto case in Owerri, Imo State, in 1996 revealed an underworld of ritualised human sacrifice in southeast Nigeria. Commercial kidnapping, political violence, and assassinations emerge as the most common kinds of banditry by the 2000s. Osisikankwu (Obioma Nwankwo) in Abia State was one of the most well-known proponents, as well as resource militants in the Niger Delta. As government failure became pronounced in Abia State and the rest of southeast Nigeria, security was taken over by a bandit-styled vigilante group known as the Bakassi Boys (Odinkalu, 2018).

The trend has continued to manifest itself in a variety of ways. In 2021, an armed organisation led by Kundu and the renowned Buharin Daji, both Fulanis, appeared in Zamfara State. Even though none of them was young, they titled the group *kungiyar gayu*, which means 'young guys association'. They were dubbed *kungiyar barayin shanu* (i.e. cow rustlers association—CRA) by the general populace. It worked clandestinely in the forests, but its true motivation became apparent in 2012 when incidences of cattle rustling became prevalent in the state. The gang members saw it as a cultural organisation dedicated to liberating the Fulani from the tyranny of security agents, traditional rulers, and politicians. This informs the restriction of membership to Fulani, particularly during the recruiting process from 2011 to 2012. Initially, gang members were primarily involved in rustling, robbery, and other petty crimes. The formation of Yan-Sa-kai and the intensification of the campaign against gang members marked a shift in the pattern of operations (Rufa'i, 2021).

The violent execution of Alhaji Isshe in Chilin, Dan-Sadau Emirate, Maru LGA of Zamfara State on 16 August 2012, by Yan-Sa-kai was the first episode that changed the trajectory of the conflict. He was charged with harbouring criminals and assisting rustlers. The gang exploited his death as a pretext for retaliation and mass executions of innocent victims. In addition, the late Isshe family gathered fighters and invited the gang to retaliate a few days later. In 2013, the gang's size, strength, power, and weapons, as well as its connections, increased dramatically. In 2016, it became increasingly diverse and internationalised, with new members sourced from the Niger Republic, Mali, and Chad, the majority of whom are Tauregs with ties to Sahellian insurgents. The entry of these outsiders has many effects on the gang. New fighters were recruited, more weaponry was introduced, and modern guerrilla tactics and strategies were taught. In addition to livestock rustling, kidnapping and abduction for ransom and other forms of gender- and sexual based violence (GSBV) became a new approach in Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina, and Kaduna States (Rufa'i, 2021).

Armed bandits are getting more sophisticated in strength, tactics, and contacts. The existence of transnational networks with identical gangs in other regions of the West African subregion is no longer a question. Contacts and affiliations with various terrorist organisations inside and outside the country demonstrate this.

Motivations for Kidnapping by Bandits in Nigeria

As mentioned earlier, banditry comprises cattle rustling, armed robbery, and kidnapping for ransom. Kidnapping has, however, remained the most virulent kind of banditry in Nigeria. It has become the country's most ubiquitous and intractable violent crime. It is worth noting that any comprehensive examination of banditry and kidnapping would be incomplete without interrogating the motivation for kidnapping by bandits in Nigeria. Motivations for kidnapping by bandits are a product of banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria.

Motivations for Kidnapping in Nigeria

Existing research on kidnapping in Nigeria offers several perspectives on the motivations for kidnapping (Akan, 2010; Ibrahim and Mukhtar, 2017; NkemdilimOgbuehi, 2018; Osumah and Aghedo, 2011; Oyewole, 2016). Several hypotheses, theories, and schools of thought have emerged as to the motivations for the increase in kidnapping cases in Nigeria. The first narrative emphasised economic motivations (Odoemene, 2014; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Osumah and Aghedo, 2011). At the heart of economically motivated kidnapping is ransom-ing. According to Bickley (2003), kidnapping for ransom (K4R) is one of the world's fastest-growing criminal industries, with an annual revenue of \$500 million. At least \$18.34 million in ransom was paid to kidnappers between June 2011 and the end of March 2020 in Nigeria. More worrisome is the fact that the majority of that sum (just under \$11 million) was paid out between January 2016 and March 2020, strengthening the fact that kidnapping is becoming increasingly profitable (SB Morgen report, 2020). Slave-raiding/kidnapping in the olden days is closely connected to this narrative.

Another perspective is the politically/ideologically motivated kidnapping. In his opinion, Mark Turner observes that kidnapping has had nothing to do with politics in the entire human history. He believes that the introduction of political motivations into kidnapping began in the 1970s. In his typology of kidnappings, he made a distinction between politically motivated and non-politically motivated kidnappings (Turner, 1998). Illuminating on the political dimension to kidnapping in Nigeria, Ibrahim and Mukhtar (2017) see it as a situation whereby unprincipled politicians use young ones as political thugs to kidnap opponents or their family members in exchange for a specific demand or to intimidate them. Focusing on the Niger Delta region, Akan (2010) and Hanson (2007) observe that kidnapping in the region is essentially a political act. Using their works as a foundation, Peters (2016) contextualised the kidnapping of expatriates by the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) as a political instrument.

Third is the ritual-motivated kidnapping. According to Oyewole (2016, p. 36), ‘kidnapping for ritual involves killing or severing the body part of abducted persons for the purpose of using it as an object of ritual sacrifice aim to acquire ritual-money, favour, fame, success, power, and protection.’ In the words of Ezemenaka (2018, p. 234), ‘ritual kidnapping can be understood as kidnapping of human beings for the practice of ritual sacrifice with the belief that the sacrifices provide or generate money for the perpetrators.’ Ritual-motivated kidnapping is one of the earliest forms of kidnapping. At first, the masterminds and sponsors of this kind of kidnapping’s targets and victims were mostly kids, lunatics, and the physically disabled (Osumah and Aghedo, 2011). Unfortunately, the get-rich-quick syndrome among Nigerian youths is fuelling more dynamic ritual kidnapping/killing in recent times. These, among others, perspectives above offer insights into the motivations for kidnapping in Nigeria. However, it is noteworthy that it might be difficult sometimes to take away economic motives from political/ideological and ritual kidnappings.

Motivations for Banditry in Nigeria

Motivations for armed banditry have been variously debated and theorised in the extant literature. As argued earlier in this chapter, banditry can be motivated primarily by ‘social’, ‘political’, or ‘economic’ considerations. With particular reference to Nigeria and, by extension, Africa, armed banditry has been explained from a variety of perspectives by scholars. The central argument of these perspectives is well captured by Okoli (2021), taking into account four of such points of view:

- (i) The narrative of ‘climate change adversity’
- (ii) Thesis on ‘un(der)governed spaces’
- (iii) Viewpoint on the ‘crime–terror nexus’
- (iv) Perspective on the ‘farmer–herder conflict’

The climate change adversity narrative blamed armed banditry on the herders–farmers conflict in the face of climate change (Okoli, 2021; Okoli and Ogayi, 2018; Olaniyan and Yahaya, 2016; Adigun, 2019; Sayne, 2011). Years of drought and desertification have forced nomadic pastoralists, most of whom are ethnic Fulanis, to migrate outside their typical grazing paths. Likewise, a combination of weather-related factors has led farmers to crop additional areas each year, leaving nomads with fewer options for watering and grazing their livestock. The ensuing hostilities have resulted in violence between pastoralists and farmers, which later transformed into armed banditry.

A central tenet of the ‘un(der) governed spaces’ thesis is that states should be internally and externally sovereign, legitimate, and capable of providing public goods such as security, welfare, and development to their citizens and spaces. The concept ‘ungoverned or undergoverned space’ refers to both physical territory and non-physical policy space that lacks effective state sovereignty and governance (Piombo, 2007; Hazen, 2010). Accordingly, places outside the state’s ‘net’ are more

prone to degenerate into anarchy and violence as armed non-state actors settle, plan logistics, are involved in criminal activity to generate finances, recruit, train, and operate there (Raleigh and Dowd, 2013). Herbst (2000) offers the theoretical foundation for the ‘un(der)governed’ thesis in many aspects, and his approach largely depends on Sahel’s state examples. Scholars (Ojo, 2020; Olaniyan and Yahaya, 2016; Okoli and Abubakar, 2021; Onwuzuruigbo, 2021) heavily rely on the thesis in their interrogation of armed banditry in Nigeria.

The ‘crime–terror nexus’ perspective explains the convergence of criminal and terrorist actors, strategies, and resources, which allows them to gain greater capacity to endanger peace, security, and economic progress. The crime–terror nexus consists of two distinct yet interconnected components. First, it includes terrorists’ direct involvement in criminal operations as a source of income, and second, it refers to the connections between organised criminal organisations and terrorist groups. Indeed, criminal and political organisations appear to be learning from one another, adopting one another’s techniques and strategies, and frequently collaborating (Wang, 2010). Tamara Makarenko’s ‘crime–terror continuum’ remains one of the most widely used models for describing crime–terror nexus dynamics. According to Makarenko (2004), the crime–terror nexus is best described as a continuum that chronicles the evolution of groups based on the dominating environmental conditions.

Organised crime and terrorism exist on the same plane and can converge at a central point. Organised crime is on the far left, and terrorism is on the far right—each in a different and separate position. Organised criminal groups can move from the left side of the continuum to the centre in the following order: ‘alliance with terrorist groups’, ‘use of terror tactics for operational purposes’, ‘use of political crime’, and finally ‘convergence’. Terrorist groups, on the other hand, move from the right as follows: ‘alliance with organised crime’, ‘criminal activities for operational purposes’, ‘commercial terrorism’, and ‘convergence’ (Makarenko, 2004). At the midpoint of the continuum is the point of ‘convergence’, where a single entity exhibits both criminal and terrorist tendencies (Rosas, 2020).

Building on Makarenko’s spectrum, Shelley and Picarelli (2005) construct a five-stage evolutionary system called the ‘terror–crime’ interaction spectrum. The five stages are ‘activity appropriation’, ‘nexus’, ‘symbiotic relation’, ‘convergence (hybrid)’, and ‘transformation’. In their exploration of the intersection of criminal networks and terrorist organisations using the Sahel Region as a case study, Alda and Sala (2014) identified three categories—‘coexistence’, ‘cooperation’, and ‘convergence’. When it comes to ‘coexistence’, criminal organisations and terrorist groups may share and/or operate in the same geographic territory. Still, there seems to be very little cooperation between them. ‘Cooperation’ occurs when each group determines that their mutual interests are protected or are not jeopardised by temporarily cooperating together. ‘Convergence’ of the two groups into an organisation occurs when separate and different activities of the two groups are integrated and confounded (Alda and Sala, 2014).

Scholars have used the crime–terror nexus perspective in explaining banditry’s exponential growth in northern Nigeria in recent years (Ojewale, 2021; Barnett

et al., 2022; Okoli & Nwangwu, 2022; Onuoha, 2022; Rufa'i, 2021). Based on extensive fieldwork across conflict areas in northern Nigeria, Barnett et al. (2022) provide deep insights into the overlapping realms of bandits and terrorist organisations in the region. Examples of such unholy alliance between bandits and terrorist groups were captured by Rufa'i (2021) thus:

Most worrisome about the issue of banditry is that there were attempts by *Boko Haram*, ISWAP and *Ansaru* to forge an alliance with the bandits. *Boko Haram*, for instance, started the move around 2014. In 2018, *Boko Haram* fighters from the Northeast were sent by the Shekau faction to support bandits in the Northwest... Dogo Gide, later forged an alliance with *Boko Haram* in the last quarter of 2019. Thus, from his base in the forest of Wawa in Niger state, Gide was recruiting members for this group and ensuring the group has stronghold in Zamfara state. In the light of this, assistance is often given to armed groups in Zamfara in form of fighters and equipment. Alhaji Shehu Shingi from Zurmi, is the major *Boko Haram* link with the bandits. (2021, pp. 31–32)

The development has created a challenging and escalated security situation that directly threatens the survival of the Nigerian state and citizens. The scenario is similar to what Heni Nsaibia (2020) dubbed the 'jihadisation of banditry'.

According to the farmer–herder conflict paradigm, armed banditry is a logical outcome of the conflict in Africa between sedentary farmers and nomadic herders (Okoli, 2021). Many Nigerians see bandits and ordinary Fulani herders as two sides of the same coin, citing rampant farmer–herder violence across the country as proof of Fulani aggressiveness, if not genocide (Barnett, 2021). Similarly, researchers on armed banditry in northwest Nigeria, such as James Barnett, revealed that many armed bandit gangs are ethnic Fulani. The latter has committed various violent crimes, including livestock rustling, across Nigeria's northwest (Zenn and Weiss, 2021). Giving insights into the narrative, Barnett (2021, para 15) chronicled it as follows:

Venal leaders in the Northwest have opportunistically sold land on restricted grazing areas and encouraged the rise of ethnic militias to advance their personal ambitions, creating a climate in which, by the early 2010s, the state was helpless to control tit-for-tat violence between Hausa farmers and Fulani herders. Entrepreneurial bandits took advantage, conscripting young herders through appeals to ethnic solidarity or promises of wealth, wives and revenge. Other herders formed militias for self-defense and subsequently drifted into criminality as a means of sustaining themselves, leading to a gradual convergence of bandits and ethnic Fulani militias. The gangs became flush with weapons from Libya by the mid-2010s while Nigeria's security forces were largely absent in the northwestern countryside, the military busy fighting *Boko Haram* and the police serving as praetorian guards to the country's elites.

The various perspectives discussed above are significant in the sense that they provide some insight into the motivations of armed banditry in Nigeria and, by extension, into kidnapping by armed bandits.

Kidnapping by Bandits: Interrogating the Actors

Banditry started in Zamfara around 2011 as a traditional farmer–herder conflict or insignificant rural unrest. The news circulating in the media, social space, and even the academic links banditry to the Fulani ethnic group. While it is incontrovertible that the majority of the bandits are of Fulani extraction, the popular narrative that links all acts of banditry to the Fulani ethnic group is absurd (Sheu, 2022a). As noted by Rufa’i (2021), most gang membership in Zamfara State was first restricted to Fulani, but it was later infiltrated by foreign forces, which changed the group in numerous ways. Giving credence to this was the statement made by the Sultan of Sokoto, Sa’ad Abubakar III, in a meeting with the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders’ Association (MACBAN) that seven to eight arrested kidnapers out of ten are Fulanis. He argued, however, that labelling all Fulanis as criminals is incorrect, even when some are.

In an attempt to deconstruct the ethno-religious undertones that have polarised armed banditry in Nigeria, Sheu (2022a) asserted that bandits are not all Fulani. Many of the bandits, he claims, identify as Hausa, Bagobiri, Gwari, Buzu, Kanuri, and other ethnic groups from all over the region and neighbouring nations. In his opinion, if ethnic identity is determined by language, these bandits are more Hausa than anything else, as the majority of them only speak and understand Hausa (Sheu, 2022a). According to recent records (suspected killers of Chief Dennis Abuda, six kidnapers arrested in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), and kidnapers of Ekiti oil magnate—Akinbami), suspected criminals who are arrested across the country as kidnapers, ritualists, and armed robbers among others included members of the Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, and Fulani tribes (The Defender, 2021). However, when it comes to kidnapping by bandits in Nigeria, the herders, the bulk of whom are Fulani, meet all of the requirements to be used as foot troops in Nigeria’s lucrative banditry business.

Giving insights into why herders are more likely to become armed bandits/kidnapers, Sheu (2022b: para 4–5) submits thus:

From Sokoto, Kaduna, Zamfara, Kogi to Niger and other states that suffer endemic banditry, the worst hit areas are those closer to the forests and bushes that are used as dens by the terrorists. Similarly, most dangerous locations on the highways are usually along deep forests that allow bandits close access to their settlements and discourage manhunts. Now, forests and bushes are to herders what cities are to urban people. With or without banditry, the forest is home and bush a resource for not only nomads, but all practicing herders. You own the city, they own the forest. It is no brainer, therefore, that a business in the forest can best be handled by its owners.

Sheu (2022b: para 6) further asserts:

Herders’ unlimited knowledge, experience and natural domestication of these forests make them the most qualified and unfortunately, available manpower to operate this dreadful terrorism. Furthermore, herding communities around the world are known for abundance of physical, physiological, psychological and emotional skills required for combat and rugged life.

In summary, the large number of herders among bandits does not exclude other ethnic groups from this heinous crime. In the same vein, their prominence is not due to ethnic identity but to a societal crisis caused by their easily adapted manner of life, which fits the conditions for these terrible acts.

Kidnapping by Bandits: Strategies and Tactics

Armed bandits are becoming more complex in power, strategy, tactics, and networking. Initially, gang members were primarily involved in rustling, robbery, and other petty crimes. Bandits and kidnappers have recently changed their strategies. Although the ends (kidnapping) may be the same, bandits have developed various means (strategies) in achieving their goals. It is important to note that bandits' strategies vary from one geopolitical zone to the other. In the southern part of the country, highway ambush is common. The majority of highway ambushes in southwestern Nigeria took place in the worst parts of the roads, where drivers had to slow down to prevent driving into potholes and trenches. According to a driver plying one of such roads, most of the kidnappings occurred while vehicles were negotiating the difficult parts of the road, and before one knew it, the gunmen would emerge from the woods and pounce on their target (Gbadamosi, 2021).

Closely connected to highway ambush is the setting up of roadblocks on highways by bandits dressed in police uniform or military camouflage and launching a surprise attack on unsuspecting travellers. On 17 January 2022, two federal government employees from the Nigerian Council of Registered Insurance Brokers (NCRIB) were kidnapped by robbers dressed in military camouflage near the Isara axis of the Lagos-Ibadan expressway in Ogun State (Salaudeen, 2022). There have also been a few cases where victims have been abducted on their farms. An eyewitness of such occurrence said that the Fulani gunmen stormed the farm with heavy guns, shot intermittently for more than 10 min, and kidnapped the farm owner and his brother (Gbadamosi, 2021).

With particular reference to northern Nigeria, where kidnapping by bandits is more common, bandits have adopted a variety of tactics in addition to those mentioned above. Other kidnapping tactics used by bandits in the north include motorcycle riding, car-riding, village raids, and attacks on schools.

Motorcycle-riding banditry is one of the strategies mostly used by bandits in northern Nigeria when wreaking havoc on rural communities. Two bandits are mostly seen on one motorcycle, placing their kidnapped victim in the centre and speeding off into the forest without leaving a trace. They sometimes invade communities in large numbers riding motorcycles armed with AK47 rifles. The dreaded motorcycle-riding armed bandits reportedly kidnapped over 300 Kankara boarding schoolchildren (Ogalah, 2021a). Even though most northern states ban the use of motorcycles, bandits are still having a great time using both registered and unregistered motorcycles to traverse most of northern Nigeria's hinterlands, where road

accessibility remains a difficulty. With the use of motorcycles, they are able to carry out their criminal acts without arousing suspicion (Daily Trust, 2020).

Seen how indispensable motorcycle is to their kidnapping operations, there have been several reports of bandits collecting motorcycles as ransom in addition to cash from kidnapped victims or their relatives. For instance, it was reported that 13 students and 3 staff members abducted from Greenfield University, a privately owned university in Kaduna State, were released in May 2021, after the parents allegedly paid 180million naira ransom and bought eight motorcycles for the bandits that kidnapped them (Isenyo, 2021). As a result, it is not far from the truth to assert that thousands of motorcycles remain in the hands of criminals who use them as a convenient means of avoiding security operatives while committing banditry, kidnapping, and mass raids on targeted areas.

Having realised that using motorcycles is no longer effective as it once was and to avoid being easily spotted, bandits have resorted to contracting the services of cars. They come in a car secretly, park it in a specific location for an easy escape, and then proceed on foot to their targeted spots to kidnap their victim/s. This was the situation in Matazu LGA, Katsina State, in March 2021, when six armed bandits entered the town in a gulf car to abduct one customs officer from his home. In order to forestall any unwanted attention, the armed bandits arrived discreetly in a gulf car en route to Mazoji village. They positioned their car a little distance from the Matazu town police checkpoint and walked to the customs officer's residence (Ogalah, 2021a).

Village raiding, on the other, is a situation in which bandits come in their hundreds to invade or ransack communities. The gangs, who operate from un(der)governed forest reserves, often ride in groups of twos and move in hundreds. They are sometimes seen on 200 motorcycles at a time, which equates to 400 bandits or more, in cases where more than one person rides a motorcycle. Bandits have been known to attack communities and carry out various atrocities using a procession of hundreds of motorcycles (Orjinmo, 2020). In recent years, gangs of bandits have raided villages in the northwest, northeast, and northcentral Nigeria, killing and kidnapping individuals as well as stealing cattle after destroying and burning buildings. For example, on Saturday, 26 February 2022, suspected bandits allegedly proceeded from one village to another, killing at least 17 people and kidnapping many more in 13 villages in Niger State of northcentral (TRT World, 2022).

Recently, bandits have found schools more attractive, as targets for demanding large ransom. Following the first reported attack on a school in Nigeria in 2014, when 276 schoolgirls were kidnapped by Boko Haram from a secondary school in Chibok, Borno State, northeast Nigeria, attacks on schools and kidnappings of students have increased across the northern part of the country (Kaaluu, 2021). Since December 2020, bandits in northern Nigeria have imitated Boko Haram's strategy, committing several mass abductions that involved over 1000 kids as victims in order to collect ransoms, although some attacks are often unnoticed.

Bandits have been kidnapping highway travellers on a modest scale for years, but they are increasingly using public outrage and political pressure from school kidnappings to force more lucrative ransom. Armed gangs in convoys of motorbikes and trucks have attacked government and religious schools at night and in daylight,

murdering workers and even killing pupils to enforce their demands (Iwara, 2021). Government Science Secondary School Kankara in Katsina State, Government Girl Secondary School Jangebe in Zamfara State, and Government Science College Kagara in Niger State are notable examples. Bandits have also raided tertiary institutions and kidnapped students. The Federal College of Forestry Mechanization in Afaka and Greenfield University in Kaduna State are two prominent examples (Madobi, 2021a). While the list of such attacks may be endless, 2021 was one of the worst years in terms of school attacks. According to a UNICEF report, there were 20 school attacks as of September 2021, with 1436 students abducted, 16 killed, and 200 missing (Obiezu, 2020). With this increase in school attacks and kidnappings by bandits, the entire educational system in northern Nigeria is in serious danger.

Added to the above are bandits' new tactics in bringing potential targets to kidnappers' dens by masquerading as drivers or passengers. A suspect, who 'delivers' unsuspecting travellers to kidnappers and works with several bandit groups on major highways in the northeast and northwest, was paraded by police in Abuja on 5 October 2021. The suspect's modus operandi involves going to a car park, presenting his car, and claiming to be an honest and hardworking driver. According to the suspect, he will calmly wait for passengers to join his car, and once he has a sufficient number of passengers, he will leave the park. Along the journey, he will make contact with members of the bandits, and once he reaches a safe location, his gang members will waylay his car and abduct the whole of his passengers (Vanguard, 2021). It is also documented by Rufa'i (2021) that a large number of poor youths from many communities were utilised by bandits as informants, giving information to them in exchange for huge monetary benefits.

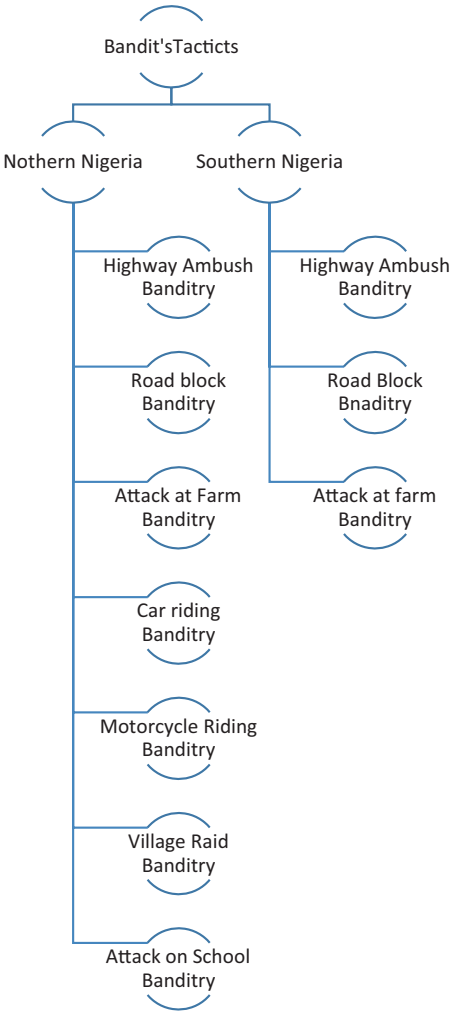
Aside from the involvement of boys in armed banditry, women are also being co-opted by bandits in their unlawful activities. Young girls worked as cooks and guards to the kidnap victims at the kidnapping den or ruga, in addition to supplying intelligence. Similarly, there are reports of girls taking part in attacks against either a rival gang or a rebellious community and participating in long-distance raids. Women sometimes disguise as food sellers to provide intelligence to the bandits, as well as suppliers/carriers of guns, narcotics, and other necessities (Rufa'i, 2021; WANEP, 2020). On 26 November 2021, Fatima Lawali, a 30-year-old female gun-runner who supplies firearms and ammunition to bandits attacking Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi, Kaduna, Katsina, and Niger States, was apprehended by police personnel with 991 ammunition (Bashir, 2021). Earlier on 23 September 2021, three females were arrested by police along the Kastina-Jibia forest for allegedly providing fuel to bandits (Iliya, 2021). Like the rest of the gang, women received a fair portion of the proceeds from every successful raid in cash and livestock (Rufa'i, 2021).

Aside from kidnapping, bandits in northern Nigeria are increasingly using the 'spirit method' and 'phone call tactic' to assault and extract money from their victims. Bandits are now masquerading as spirits-jinn (al-jannu) to harass victims. Threats were used by 'bandits turned spirits' to compel their victims to do their bidding or risk having their family members killed. One victim of bandits masquerading as spirits revealed that she was contacted on the phone by the false spirit and ordered to drop money at a location or risk her family being killed. Out of anxiety,

the victim complied with the ‘spirit’ and brought the money to the said location. A phone call is another related tactic used to squeeze money from targets. Some victims in remote areas have recounted how bandits call their mobile phones, requesting ransom to escape being kidnapped (Ogalah, 2021a). In the north, other crimes involving bandits are forced labour, wilful destruction of crops, gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV), including assault, rape, forced prostitution, gang rape, and forced marriage. Figure 7.1 below illustrates the bandit’s tactics across northern and southern Nigeria.

As a result of the preceding discourses, some intrinsic issues concerning kidnapping by bandits in Nigeria are identifiable. First, kidnapping incidents by bandits in Nigeria are more prevalent in the northern part, with the northwest worst hit. Second, kidnappings executed by bandits are primarily motivated by monetary gain and so

Fig. 7.1 Tactics/strategies adopted by bandits in kidnapping. Source: Design by the author



have no recorded ideological connections. Third, there are indications that terrorists who have been fighting the war in the northeast have infiltrated the bandits. The Kankara kidnapping, for example, has the operational imprints of the Boko Haram insurgents, which have mastered the act from earlier kidnappings of schoolgirls in Chibok and Dapchi, northeastern Nigeria. This occurrence lends further support to the crime–terror nexus thesis.

Consequences of Kidnapping by Bandits in Nigeria

Banditry in Nigeria has deteriorated into a multifaceted national problem with dire consequences. To say the least, kidnapping by armed bandits has had severe impacts in Nigeria. This section therefore investigates the effects of armed bandit kidnappings in Nigeria.

The Effect on Overall National Security

Bandit kidnapping has had an impact on security throughout the country. The banditry in the northwest is putting further demand on the already overstretched security apparatus. Counter-insurgency in the northeast have lingered on in part because of lack of resources and manpower. The military's continued involvement in the fight against bandits and other forms of violence in the northwest depletes resources required in the east (International Crisis Group, 2020). According to Nigeria's National Security Strategy (2019), banditry accounts for almost 40% of the country's national insecurity. Banditry, which began as a loose collection of criminal groups mainly operating in locations with minimal statehood, has recently grown in confidence. The bandits, estimated to number in tens of thousands, have acquired a startling offensive capability, shooting down military planes and infiltrating military security (Barnett and Rufa'i, 2021).

On 24 August 2021, bandits invaded the permanent site of the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) in Kaduna State, killing two officers and kidnapping one (Ojewale, 2021). Similarly, on 11 September 2021, armed bandits attacked a Nigerian military base in Zamfara State, killing 12 people, including nine Nigerian Air Force personnel, two police officials, and one Nigerian Army officer. The assailants also took firearms from the deceased service members and set fire to other equipment in the facility (Olubajo, 2021). These individual incidents were a severe setback in Nigeria's campaign to combat banditry. They demonstrate that, despite government attempts, security situation is rapidly worsening in the country. The menace of kidnapping by bandits has evolved into a complex national security problem from its simple and localised beginnings. Banditry has grown significantly and has become a significant threat to the national security.

Humanitarian Impact

Thousands of people have died due to banditry in Nigeria over the last few years. Given that much of the killing happened in isolated rural communities and hence has not been reported by either the news media or security agencies, it is difficult to find reliable data for casualties across the entire country. However, it is a fact that bandits' mass kidnappings and deadly raids on civilians in vulnerable areas are fueling a humanitarian disaster. Nigeria's humanitarian crises have reached an alarming level, resulting in unprecedented situations in various sectors. According to Statista, Africa has the world's highest population of internally displaced persons (IDPs), with Nigeria accounting for the third highest of the number (Sasu, 2021). Over 3.2 million people have been displaced since Boko Haram's violent attacks began in 2014, including 2.9 million internally displaced persons in northeastern Nigeria, 684,000 IDPs in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, and 304,000 refugees in the four countries (UNHCR, 2020). Farmers/herders conflict, which is more evident in Nigeria's northcentral states, has also resulted in the displacement of over 160,000 people. Another cankerworm that has eaten deeply into the nation's security apparatus is kidnapping by bandits ravaging the northwestern region (Madobi, 2021b).

More than 8000 people were killed as a result of banditry in Sokoto, Katsina, and Zamfara states, and around 1.7 million people are refugees in the Niger Republic, with another 186,820 having to seek refuge in various IDP camps (Madobi, 2021b). The humanitarian consequences of bandit kidnapping continue to be worrisome. Approximately 3672 have been kidnapped, and bandits burned more than 500 villages in Zamfara alone between 2011 and 2019 (Ojewale, 2021). In the same vein, between the 4th and 6th of January 2022, armed bandits attacked various villages in Zamfara State, killing over 200 people and displacing 10,000 more (GCR2P, 2022). The living conditions of internally displaced persons (IDPs) are deplorable, with irregular and insufficient food delivery, poor housing, and poor health and sanitation facilities. The state of internally displaced persons is worsened by the near absence of humanitarian organisations from affected regions, owing to a severe miscalculation of the scale and severity of the carnage, as well as insecurity that prevents access for needs assessments in some locations (International Crisis Group, 2020).

Impact on Food Security

Kidnapping by bandits has impacted all aspects of human life, including food security. According to World Food Summit (1996), 'food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.' Aside from kidnapping by bandits, other related banditry acts that negatively impact food security in Nigeria include chasing farmers from their farmlands, seizing farmlands, stealing cattle, destroying and plundering grain silos, and obstructing

local trade routes. The plight of Nigerian farmers, whose efforts generate the majority of the food consumed in the country, is aggravated by banditry acts such as farmers being murdered, cattle being rustled, and harvests being plundered or destroyed. The recent increase in bandit kidnappings has caused many farmers to flee their farms across the six geopolitical zones searching for safe havens (Sami, 2022).

Locals in several farming villages around the state, for example, no longer visit farms because of the threat of bandits. These individuals grow the crops and other foods that city dwellers rely on. They also generate some raw materials required by local companies like edible oil refineries, bakeries, and livestock feed producers. As much as farmers stay away from their farms for fear of losing their lives, local food and raw material production will be disrupted, resulting in an astronomical rise in the price of food and other basic needs in the markets (HassanWuyo, 2021). In short, Nigeria was rated 97th out of 113 nations in the Global Food Security Index (GFSI) 2021, with a score of 41.3 per cent. According to the bi-annual Cadre Harmonise framework report 2021, more than 12.1 million Nigerians in 21 states experienced food insecurity at the crisis or emergency level between October and December 2021. The number is expected to rise to 16.8 million between June and August 2022. With farmers becoming critically endangered in Nigeria due to system vulnerabilities, bandits are putting every life in the country on the path to destruction.

Aside from poor weather, bandit attacks on farmers and their farms have worsened Nigerians' nutritional inadequacy. As bandits' kidnapping continues to halt food supplies across Nigeria, malnutrition may be a major issue for Nigerian children. Malnutrition has long been a big issue in Nigeria, and that was before the country's current state of insecurity. Banditry only worsens the situation, with women and children extremely prone. As a result of banditry, most families have lost their homes, their means of sustenance, their houses, and basic sanitation and drinkable water; in some cases, children have even lost their parents. All of this contributes to worsening the problem (Oyedepi, 2021).

Hence, kidnapping by bandits and the resultant food crisis are to blame for the country's worsening child malnutrition. According to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Acute Malnutrition (AMN) analysis (2022), About 1.74 million children below the age of five are projected to be malnourished by August 2022. This comprises almost 614,000 acutely undernourished children, including over one million mildly malnourished children. Also, nearly 151,000 expectant mothers and breastfeeding women will most certainly be severely malnourished. According to Imam (cited in Oyedepi, 2021, para. 21), malnutrition has both 'immediate and long-term consequences's. Besides weakening the immune system, it also hinders the development of human capital, which has a negative impact on the economy.

Impact on Education

Another sector worst hit by the activities of bandits in Nigeria is the education sector. Bandit kidnappings of schoolchildren pose a severe threat to education in northern Nigeria. The region has the poorest educational performance records in the country already, and the frequent attacks on schools and kidnapping of students and teachers have combined to further worsen the poor educational status of the region (Umoru, 2021). As of 2021, the 12-year-old Boko Haram insurgency and the recent spike in armed banditry had led to the shutting down of over 600 schools. With the rate of student kidnappings, parents have also decided to keep their children out of school (Iwara, 2021). If something is not urgently done, it may also have an impact on school enrolment rates, which are already low in the north. Furthermore, these kidnappings may lead teachers and other school workers to resign and look for work in a different place, thus preventing more children from receiving a proper education. The United Nations' Global Goal 4 seeks quality education for everybody. This goal will not be attained if attacks on schools continue to stand in the way of children's right to an education and put their lives in danger (Okunola, 2021).

Impacts on the Economy

Bandits' operations have caused enormous damage to the entire country's economy in general and the northwest in particular. As previously stated, agriculture, which provides a living for nearly 80% of the people of the northwest, has been heavily damaged. Farmers in the impacted areas have been fleeing their farms for many years due to fear of attacks or abduction. The State Emergency Management Agency in Sokoto State estimates that as of October 2019, 21,316 hectares of farmland in 5 local government areas were uncultivated, as 80,000 fearful farmers maintain a strategic distance (Daily Trust, 2019a). Significant herds have also been stolen; in Zamfara State, for example, over 141,360 cattle and 215,241 sheep got stolen between 2011 and 2019. Both farmers and herders have suffered as a result of these disruptions (International Crisis Group, 2020).

Similarly, the rise in bandit kidnapping for ransom and other forms of criminality plaguing the country has adversely impacted commercial activities. Several shops and other businesses in northwestern Nigeria have been destroyed or closed as a result of deliberate attacks and kidnappings of owners, heightening anxieties of insecurity. Traders have to abandon their businesses and flee to other places in some situations (Idris, 2021). Local traders are hesitant to deliver agricultural products to markets due to the danger involved. Investor confidence has declined as well, which also undermines the country's industrialisation. The National Trade Fair organised by the Niger state government in May 2019 had a relatively low attendance, which the president of the state's Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture, Abdulkadir Hassan, blamed on potential attendees' fears of bandit attacks and

kidnapping (Opara, 2019). As said by Comrade Issa Aremu, bandits' operations across the country are undermining farming cultivation, agro-allied development, and industrial growth. Insecurity will make Nigerian industries even less competitive, thereby impacting employment. He stated that there could be no industrialisation while there is a conflict (HassanWuyo, 2021).

Impacts on Women

It is important to note the impact of the scale of violent attacks by bandits on women and girls. During these attacks, women and girls in northern Nigeria suffered the brunt of banditry. Some women in the affected areas suffered early widowhood or the death of their children, while others were left orphaned and forced to escape their homes in search of a better life (WANEP, 2020). Women are increasingly raped, kidnapped, or commodified by families who are forced to exchange their daughters for protection against kidnapping. For example, in the Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State, at least 30 women and girls were raped indiscriminately among five villages on 22 November 2021 (Adam, 2021). In Tsafe Local Government Area of Zamfara State, a similar act was carried out in response to communities failing to pay a N3 million fee (Ogalah, 2021b). As stated by Amnesty International, insecurity in northern Nigeria adversely impacts females. There has been a significant increase in child marriage and teen pregnancies (Ojewale and Balogun, 2022). According to reports, some 13 girls kidnapped from the Federal Government College in Birnin Yauri, Kebbi State, have been married off to bandits, with some of them reportedly pregnant (Iliya, 2022). These, among others, points suggest that kidnapping by bandits has caused untold damage, which deserves dramatic state responses, in Nigeria.

State's Response to Kidnapping by Bandits

Federal Government Response

Several efforts and measures have been implemented to halt the threats of armed banditry and kidnapping by state actors since the inception of the crisis to no avail. The security personnel have played a vital role in the federal government's efforts at controlling armed banditry. The federal government has undertaken several 'anti-banditry' operations involving the police and army. The air force has also carried out a number of aerial operations against forest camps (Oyewole, 2021; Premium Times, 2020). In addition, the Nigerian government has attempted more collaboration with the government of the Niger republic. The two neighbours established a combined military border patrol unit in September 2018 (Erezi, 2019).

Arguably, military activities have yielded some results. Hundreds of men suspected of being members of armed bandits have been detained, hundreds more have been killed, several of their camps and facilities have been destroyed, arms and ammunition have been confiscated, and hundreds of kidnap victims have been rescued by the military and the police. Despite such records of success, security agents have not been able to bring down a wide range of armed bandits. Regardless of increased support, the available personnel, logistics, and weapons are inadequate to respond to armed bandits' operations in time.

Aside from military operations, other measures taken by the federal government against banditry include a ban on gold mining in Zamfara State, declaring Zamfara State a 'no-fly zone', shutting down of telecommunication in Zamfara State, and the declaration of bandits as terrorists. These have also recorded little or no success.

State Government Response

The state government's initial response to armed bandit kidnapping was to provide funding and other logistics to federal security forces deployed to their states to combat the armed bandits, as well as assistance to victims of bandit attacks (Daily Trust, 2019b; Premium Times, 2019). In order to complement the federal government's effort and counter any attack by bandits, local vigilantes and the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) were formed and empowered by some northern governors. In the south, the southwestern governors jointly set up the *Western Nigeria Security Network (WNSN)*, code-named *Operation Amotekun*, on 9 January 2020, in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, to curb various regional security challenges such as armed banditry and kidnapping (Feyisipo, 2020). Likewise, on 11 April 2021, the governors of the southeast states formed a joint security outfit known as Ebube Agu (Odunsi, 2021). Also, all the 17 southern governors resolved to ban open grazing in their respective states on 17 May 2021 (Kabir, 2021).

Other responses by some state governments, especially in the north, include negotiation with/amnesty for bandits, ban on gold mining, ban on the use of commercial motorcycles, restriction of tricycle movement at nighttime, indefinite closure of schools, ban on the sale of petroleum products, closure of strategic markets, and ban on the movement of cattle.

Despite the foregoing, some of the policy measures can be found to have a negligible impact in practical terms, while some were outrightly counterproductive. For instance, Rufa'i (2021) notes how non-state security activities such as the Vigilante Group of Nigeria, Yan-Banga, and Yan-Sa-kai have contributed to the intensification of the violence in Zamfara State. Similarly, the arms-for-cash treaties work for a short time, but after roughly a year, the initiatives collapsed, and the armed bandits increased their attacks (International Crisis Group, 2020). In addition, bandits on their part put in place some strategies to counter some of the state's responses. For example, when telecommunication was shut down, and sales of petroleum products were banned in some states, bandits in Kastina State resulted in communicating

with one another using radio frequency, walkie-talkie transceivers. Bandits also prey on vehicles and motorcyclists, stealing petrol from their tanks and forcing villagers to buy fuel for them (Oyelude, 2021). Consequently, it appears that all these initiatives have recorded limited results. While any progress is better than no progress, failure to reach a meaningful solution to the violence remains a major security concern.

Conclusion

Kidnapping by bandits has become a serious security issue in Nigeria. While kidnapping is motivated by various factors, central to kidnapping by bandits is economic motivation. Tactics used by bandits in abducting their victims include highway ambush, roadblock, motorcycle riding, car-riding, village raids, and attacks on schools. As a criminal act, bandit kidnapping has negatively impacted national security, food security, education, and economic sectors. It also has fueled humanitarian crises and nutritional inadequacy. In terms of general national security, bandit kidnapping has impacted security across the country. Banditry has put more pressure on already overwhelmed security forces. The situation has also resulted in a humanitarian crisis, with hundreds of thousands of people being forced to flee their homes. On food security, it has caused food shortages in the country and worsening malnutrition, particularly among children. The activities of the bandits have wreaked havoc on the economy of the entire country in general and the northwest in particular. Kidnappings of schoolchildren by bandits pose a serious threat to education in northern Nigeria.

In response, the states (both federal and states government) have explored various control measures in addition to military operations. However, it appears that the measures have achieved minimal results thus far. While any progress is preferable to none, failure to find a lasting solution to the violence has implications. Though security operations against armed bandits are necessary to reduce kidnappings and banditry in Nigeria, they may not provide long-term security. There is an urgent need to strive towards a coordinated and collaborative approach to prevent bandits from escalating further. This will involve a concentration not only on combating bandits but also on effectively destroying the support structures of all non-state actors and their state patrons for an extended time for bandit groups to lose momentum. In addition to manned air surveillance by the air force, the government should deploy unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), satellites, and other cutting-edge technologies in the sky against bandits to discover and then demolish their hideouts to reduce casualties. In accordance with the country's new National Security Strategy, border control should also be prioritised, particularly along the country's border with the Niger Republic.

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Chapter 8

Kidnapping for Ransom in Nigeria



Michael B. Aleyomi and Amos Olajubu

Abstract Kidnapping has become a ransom taking business, which the criminal gangs exploit as a source of wealth creation. In this case, Nigeria has become a major hotspot for kidnapping, which has developed into major threats to national and international security. In Nigeria, crimes and criminalities such as kidnapping have become a very lucrative business that is being carried out at a commercial scale. The growing gap between the rich and the poor, compounded with greed and irrational ambition on the part of idle youths to amass quick wealth in the society, has resulted in an increase in crime rates across Nigeria. Kidnapping has become an attractive criminal enterprise owing to its low risk and high financial yield for in the hands of its perpetrators, who have turned it into a multi-million-naira enterprises. It occurs at any time and in any location, including homes, schools, religious sites, streets, markets, business establishments, farms, highways, during the day and at night. It is based on this background that effort is geared towards investigating the phenomenon of kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria and to highlight the implications for national security. The objective of this chapter is to examine kidnapping for ransom by bandits and insurgents, who take advantage of inadequate policing and easy availability of firearms across Nigeria, paying attention to the relationship between perpetrators and the victims, how negotiations are usually carried out, the mode of payment of ransom, and finally the impacts of kidnapping on the hostages.

Introduction

Kidnapping for ransom has remained one of the most significant problems that human society has encountered over time in most parts of the globe, like Venezuela, Mexico, Yemen, Syria, Philippines, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia (Briggs, 2001; Forest, 2012; Graham, 2011; Musawa, 2021; Samuel, 2019). Kidnappings have been carried out for a variety of reasons in the past, particularly in Nigeria, where kidnappings have been carried out for a variety of reasons, including retribution, as

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a political or terrorist strategy, ritual, for power and influence, and exploitation, such as ransom or sexual exploitation (Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019). Today, kidnapping primarily has become a ransom taking business, which criminal gangs exploit as a source of wealth creation (Bickley 2003; Osumah and Aghedo, 2011). In line with the above, kidnapping in Nigeria has attracted a lot of attention with ransoms being the main focus.

Nigeria is a major hotspot for kidnapping, which has become threats to both national and international security (Joab-Peterside, 2020; Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021). In Nigeria, crimes and criminalities such as kidnapping have become lucrative business that is carried out at a commercial scale (Sunday, 2019). The growing gap between the rich and the poor, compounded with greed and irrational ambition on the part of idle youths to amass quick wealth in the society, has resulted to increase in crime rates across Nigeria (Diara, 2010). Kidnapping has become widespread in the country to the extent that people of all ages, genders, and social classes are terrified of being the next victim. After the return to democracy in Nigeria, the epidemic of kidnapping has grown in alarming proportions and has remained a central aspect of the criminal victimization landscape (Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019). Undeniably, in the recent years, kidnapping has remained Nigeria's most ubiquitous and intractable violent crime, as well as the most virulent kind of bandit/terrorist tactic.

Kidnapping has become an attractive business to some unscrupulous elements owing to its low risk and high financial yield for perpetrators, who have reportedly turned it into a multi-million-naira enterprise (Obarisiagbon and Aderinto, 2018; Okoli and Abubakar, 2021; Osumah and Aghedo, 2011). Kidnapping can be targeted at individual or groups. While Nigeria is not totally oblivious of kidnapping, however, the dimension it has taken since 2014 is disturbing and alarming (Aghedo 2015; Ibrahim and Mukhtar, 2017). This kind of security threat in Nigeria also occurs at any time and in any location, including homes, schools, religious sites, streets, markets, business establishments, farms, highways, during the day and at night. In many locations of Nigeria, schoolchildren have been kidnapped in bunches (Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021).

Given the pecuniary motive driving kidnapping activities, the primary aims of abduction for ransom are the poor villagers and ordinary schoolchildren, female/women, and those deemed affluent enough to pay a fee in exchange for their release. Nigeria's boarding schools have become a hunting ground for kidnappers (Maclean, 2021). Despite pertinent provisions in the Federal Republic of Nigeria's Constitution of 1999, that prioritize security of life and property among the objectives of the state, kidnapping for ransom has continued unabated in the country. Specifically, Section 14(2b) of the country's *grundnorm* statutorily provided that the central purpose of government shall be the security and welfare of the people (FGN, 1999). Given the high stakes associated with this constitutional clause especially the operational word "shall," the current sporadic and persistent wave of violent conflicts and crimes, such as kidnapping in Nigeria, has worsened the breach of this crucial statutory provision.

It is based on this background that effort is geared toward investigating the phenomenon of kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria and to highlight the implications for national security. The objectives of this chapter include, first and foremost, to investigate the issue of kidnapping for ransom by bandits and insurgents, who take advantage of inadequate policing and the easy availability of firearms, across time and region in Nigeria. Secondly, paying attention to perpetrators and the victims as to the time they spent with the criminals/abductors. Thirdly, to analyze how negotiations are being carried out vis-à-vis mode of payment of ransom. Finally and most importantly, the chapter seeks to examine the impact of kidnapping on the hostage.

Conceptual Clarifications

It is important to clarify the concept of kidnapping and ransom. Just like any other social science terms, it is difficult to have a generally acceptable definition for the term “kidnapping,” especially when it is mistaken to mean hostage taken, because the concept is susceptible to misconception as it varies from person to person, state to state, jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and operational audacity/purpose (Aghedo, 2015; Okoli and Abubakar, 2021; Tade et al., 2020). To this end, kidnapping/abduction for ransom and hostage taking are often used interchangeably. While the latter targets victims to achieve some particular objectives, mainly political or rituals, the former’s primary objective is to demand ransom payment from their victims or as a hostage (Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019, p. 252; Uzorma & Nwanegbo-Ben, 2014).

Turner (1998) defined kidnapping as a situation in which people are taken against their will and transported to a location where they are kept in an unjustified incarceration. It also refers to situations in which people are led away and subsequently held illegally. The definitions make a clear distinction between abduction and any type of legal house arrest or police custody that may be imposed by the state and carried out by law enforcement authorities. According to Dodo (2010), the act of seizing, confining, abducting, or transporting away a person by force or deception usually when he or she is subjected to involuntary servitude in exchange for a ransom is known as kidnapping. Thus, forceful seizure of a victim, wrongful confinement of victims in an unknown location against his or her will, and denial or limitation of the victim’s willful/conscious access to contact are all defining elements of kidnapping.

To Osumah and Aghedo (2011), kidnapping is a means of achieving a political and commercial advantage over rivals and co-competitors in order to ensure economic survival; and exchange of people who have been kidnapped for ransom for the criminals’ financial gain. Corroborating the above definitions, Attoh (2012) maintains that abduction is an unforeseen event that occurs when a person is taken away secretly by another person or group of people in an unlawful manner. Kidnapping, according to this definition, is an accidental event in which a person is taken forcibly by another person or group of people for an illegal reason. The above

definitions demonstrate that kidnapping is a criminal act that occurs when a person or group of people use coercion and/or torture to abduct and confine a victim or group of victims to a place or location (against his/her or their will) for the purpose of obtaining something from the abductee(s), someone or a group of people related to the abductee(s) by blood or by association.

Defining kidnapping with respect to the legal point of view, the Nigeria's criminal law observes that kidnapping "is the taking away or transportation of a person against that person's will, usually to hold the person in false imprisonment, a confinement without legal authority" (Mbaegbu, 2014, p. 31). Accordingly, there is no single optimal method to define kidnapping. It is obvious that an act that is labeled kidnapping must involve the forcible removal of a victim from one location to another, as well as the detention or seizure of that person, whether a child or an adult. Hence, Inyang and Abraham (2013) noted that it is legally recognized as a restriction on another's liberty, since it breaches the provision of freedom of movement as established in the Federal Republic of Nigeria's constitution, from which all other laws are derived. Kidnapping can therefore be seen as an illegal arrest, capture, and removal of a person from one place to the other against his or her will. Hence, kidnapping is an unlawful taken of someone and confine him or her in isolation with illegal and heinous motives.

Furthermore, the term "ransom," on the other hand, is described as the demand for some kind of money, in cash or in kind, in return for abductees, either a person or property, who are often placed in a vulnerable position (Mateo, 2004; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019). Therefore, ransoming means the act of redeeming or payment made to secure the release of a person under force imprisonment of captives. It is thus expedient, for the purpose of this chapter to define kidnapping for ransom as any illegal act of hostage taking, capturing, and/or transporting a victim be it an individual or group of people, to a secret destination for imprisonment against the victim's will and under threat of harm in attempt to extort money/payment as a condition for the victim's release, directly from the victim or those associated with them, such as relatives, associates, employers, the government, or any other third party.

In order to ensure that money is paid as soon as possible in return for the victim's release, the perpetrators use threats and abuse, including torture. However, the result of such a criminal act is not always predictable. There have been several instances where victims have been killed by kidnappers despite paying ransom, others have died of disease or illness, and some have been killed during failed rescue operations/ attempts. Some have been fortunate enough to be rescued unharmed by security personnel, while some were voluntarily released by their abductors after payment of ransom or by any other means of intervention in Nigeria (Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021). Irrespective of the motive of abduction, it is important to emphasize that kidnapping for ransom is a crime in Nigeria and under the international law.

It is against this background that kidnapping has become a serious security concern in Nigeria, with the fate of the victims attracting increased attention (Oyewole, 2016a). In essence, kidnapping for ransom has taken on a troubling new dimension, becoming a common occurrence in unstable regimes and countries like Nigeria.

Abdulkabir (2017) and Ezemenka (2018) argued that kidnapping rates have been on a geometrical increase since 2014. It has been reported that thousands of people including students have been kidnapped across the country, like Brinin Gwari and Mando in Kaduna state, the Kagara in Niger state, Kankara in Katsina state, the Jangebe in Zamfara state, and many others by bandit coupled with the Dapchi girls in Yobe state and the Chibok girls in Borno state by insurgents among other important personalities (Aleyomi and Nwagwu, 2020; Busari, 2021; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

To link the reasoning for criminalities or organized crimes with kidnapping for ransoms across spheres of life, a variety of theoretical constructs have been used (Briggs, 2001; Ezeibe and Eze, 2012; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Otu & Nnam 2018; Samuel, 2019). Indeed, several grand, middle-range, and micro-based social science theories have potential for explaining kidnapping both as a discrete and well-publicized criminal act. However, given the pecuniary nature of kidnapping and the rising pace at which it is becoming a natural part of Nigeria's life, this chapter takes a combined theoretical bridging approach of the Queer Ladder Theory (QLT) and Conflict Theory (CT), among several other political economy theorems. Such theorems include rational choice, social learning, and social contagiousness, anomie, victimological framework, constitutive theory, fraud triangle model, etc. The justification for QLT and CT is because Nigeria's political economy fosters unhealthy class division, competition, and conflict in which everyone tries to make it and gain sociopolitical and/or economic power.

The QLT was popularized by the American sociologist, Daniel Bell (1919–2011), who coined the term “queer ladder” to describe organized crime's instrumental nature as a desperate method of economic and social advancement in which this empirical construct has blossomed into a common theoretical paradigm for understanding the contemporary crime and conflict studies (Ahar, 2015; Okoli and Orinya, 2013). QLT basically assumes that any organized crime is: (i.) an instrumental behavior, which serves as a means to an end; (ii.) a tool for social change and/or socioeconomic advancement; and (iii.) a method of accumulating wealth, influence and build power. From the foregoing assumptions, it is instructive to deduce that the idea behind the applicability of QLT in kidnapping for ransom, which is a form of an organized crime, is plausible in Nigeria context as it is evident that the government has demonstrated weak political will/ability to enforce law and order, sanction offenders, and discourage crime, where public corruption is rampant, and legal employment opportunities are scarce. This allows criminals to operate with impunity/immunity and franchise.

Furthermore, crime and deviant behavior, as in the case of banditry and terrorism, are explained by CT as a result of the existence, form, and mechanism of social relations resulting from a society's sociopolitical and economic order (Alexander

and Klein, 2009; Otu & Nnam 2018). That is, a society's political economy is a determinant in and of itself; it describes and decides the occurrence, tendencies, and patterns of criminal behavior in general, as well as the prevalence of other social events and institutions in that society. As a consequence, the form of socioeconomic order in Nigeria, as well as the politics that result from it, is crucial to understanding the intractable problem of kidnapping for ransom in the country. As explained by Ake (1981), power and injustice, as well as their connectivity with crime, are regarded very seriously in conflict-political economy theory because Nigeria's political economy encourages nasty class struggle.

People engage in a variety of unethical/illegal activities, such as kidnapping another person in a commodity-like fashion for ransom payment, in order to achieve the society's much-heralded triumph target. This could explain why kidnapping is a problem that affects people from all walks of life in Nigeria, be it high or low social classes. In this regard, it should be noted that the epidemic of kidnapping for ransom amidst banditry/terrorism in Nigeria has been fueled by criminals' desire for financial gain in an atmosphere that tolerates crime to some extent, worsened by the prevailing socioeconomic malaise in the country. Thus, empirical applications in providing insight into the sociological foundations of organized crime, particularly kidnapping for ransom as a type of banditry and terrorism in Nigeria, which refer to an unfavorable pattern of social mobility in Nigeria, inform the theoretical understanding of QLT and CT in this discourse. Consequently, those that engage in organized crime, such as abduction, do so in a desperate attempt to acquire financial "independence."

Prevalence of Kidnapping for Ransom in Nigeria

Historically, kidnapping has lived with humanity for a long period. Kidnapping dates back to the pre-colonial period in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. Indeed, kidnappings for rape, ritual, or other purposes were recorded in various parts of Nigeria well before the arrival of colonialism (Ezeibe and Eze, 2012; Ibrahim and Mukhtar, 2017; Obarisiagbon and Aderinto, 2018; Okoli and Abubakar, 2021; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019). Hence, kidnapping is not new in the country. Kidnappings in the post-colonial era can be traced back to the 1980s, when such acts were often coupled with rituals, particularly for financial gain (Dodo, 2010; Oyewole, 2016a). Following the crisis in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger-Delta region in the late 1990s, kidnapping became a particularly serious misdemeanor (Aghedo 2015; Ene, 2018; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019). The chronicles of datelines of some kidnapping cases in Nigeria especially in the Niger Delta and other southern regions between 1999 and 2011 were scholastically documented (see Dodo, 2010; Ezeibe and Eze, 2012, pp. 30–34; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019, pp. 237–249; Otu & Nnam 2018, pp. 30–31).

The rationale for kidnapping between these periods was an expression of agitation for marginalization in the Niger-Delta region, by the oil multinationals and the

Nigerian state in which the aggrieved youths of the region took up arms to protest (Ezeibe and Eze, 2012; Omotola, 2009; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene 2019). However, kidnapping has spread across the country as a result of the precarious environment in the Niger Delta especially the northern region where kidnapping has been taken up as a business (Sunday, 2019). In fact, today's kidnappings are primarily carried out for ransom—the payment of money or a tangible equivalent in exchange for someone's release. The abduction industry works on the assumption that the victim is worth a ransom and that the victim or their proxy has the financial means to pay. Each victim has a monetary value known as a “kidnap ransom,” which makes them a desirable target. Indeed, kidnapping in Niger Delta started with ransoming of oil workers for development or infrastructural projects (Oyewole, 2016b).

Consequently, a variety of factors influence this criminal activity. The outbreak and prevalence of kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria has been linked to a number of interconnected factors. These factors are mutually representing, but not exhaustive of, the Nigerian political economy's crisis. Increase in poverty, unemployment, and inequality rate as a result of mismanagement of the economy, proliferation of weapons, state actors' complicity, ethno-religious bigotry, and a lack of institutional capacity for control among others are the key causes of the country's growing kidnapping rate (Ibrahim and Ahmad, 2020; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Salau, 2017). These reasons can be expressive or instrumental. While the former explains an attempt by the perpetrator to voice out and/or publicizes a grievance or expresses a frustrated emotion, the latter suggests an effort to obtain a particular outcome such as ransom.

In both expressive and instrumental motives, the victims, who are mostly students (school children), women, politicians/business tycoons, affluent/government officials, and foreigners, are at the receiving end. In carrying out their activities, the perpetrators may look at the victim's social or political status, the victim's family or corporate premium, the type of kidnappers involved, and the dynamics of ransom negotiation are all factors to consider. A good one, for instance, is the consideration of the exploits of Chikwudubem Onwuamadike (also known as Evans) as a prominent abduction kingpin. Evans was reported to have made over 6 billion naira from abduction and was considered one of Nigeria's richest men. He was caught in 2017 in Lagos and found guilty of kidnapping and condemned to death by a Federal High Court in Lagos and other notorious criminal activities in August 2020 (Ikeru, 2020).

Unlike the Niger-Delta militants and few others like Evans, who used single and/or group abductions to raise funds for personal use as well as for the cause of a particular group, the current pattern of kidnapping for ransom though related to that of the Niger-Delta militants has been carried out in Nigeria by organized armed groups such as bandits and insurgents. The commercialization of kidnapping that became rampant in Nigeria in recent years majorly in the south-south and south-east regions (Ezeibe and Eze, 2012) has become ubiquitous across all the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja with prevalent situation in the North-East and North-West regions. The survey of the current situation where government is compelled to pay ransom to armed bandits and insurgents in the northern region and

across the country is scandalous and reflects the poor degree of security preparation on the part of government pursuant to sections 14(2), 33 and 35 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that affirms a citizen's right to life, personal liberty and general security, and deals with the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy (FGN 1999; ThisDay, 2021).

Since the country is ill-prepared security wise, kidnappings in Nigeria have successfully been carried out by criminal gangs, bandits, and terrorist groups with politico-economic motives (Daily Trust, 2016; Dodo, 2010; Ibrahim and Ahmad, 2020; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019). Indeed, kidnapping for ransom is a common way for bandits to make a living and make money available for terrorists to execute their nefarious ambition, i.e. insurgency, although the line between criminal and terrorist organizations is not always clear. For example, the government finds it difficult to declare the act of banditry and kidnapping as terrorist act in Nigeria. Kidnappers in Nigeria are more likely to be terrorist oriented and may find corporate target (such as school children) more appealing than wealthy individuals when seeking both financial reward and publicity for their cause. Children are quite strategic in how they employ their activities.

Representatives of a big and vulnerable audience in society are virtually exclusively targeted. When a manager of a large, well-known firm or vulnerable school children (particularly girls) are kidnapped, the media pays more attention than when an individual who has made money for himself is kidnapped. Consequently, as a way of raising funds for their operations, the insurgents participate in single or group kidnappings. Families and associates (government) of the victims often pay large amounts as ransom to ensure their freedom. Thus, organized local and transnational crime syndicates have been active, in addition to bandits and insurgents. This is reaching apocalyptic proportions in Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, and Sokoto states in North-West Nigeria, where rural bandits frequently engage in kidnapping.

The kidnappers, who often carry out mass kidnappings of women and school-children either for political reason or to demand ransom in most cases across Nigeria are now prevalent in states like Borno, Yobe, Katsina, Niger, Kaduna, among others. For instance, between 2012 and 2013, kidnappers' targets were directed toward public officials and their families, business managers, and foreigners in Nigeria (Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019). In 2013, some Nigerian government officials and their relatives were allegedly kidnapped in exchange for ransoms ranging from \$10,000 to \$300,000 (Zenn 2014). Kidnapping thus became a useful source of funding for the bandits and terrorist groups. Boko Haram's kidnapping further expanded into Cameroon from 2013. On February 19, 2013, seven French tourists were kidnapped in Waza Park in Cameroon's far north and taken to Nigeria's northeast. After a \$3.15 million ransom was paid, they were released on April 18, 2013 (Oyewole, 2016b).

Over the years, Nigeria has seen a number of mass kidnappings carried out by either bandits or rebels, with the most recent incidents rising fears that no school is secured. A mass abduction of 276 schoolgirls on April 14, 2014, by Boko Haram from a secondary school in Chibok in Borno state exposed the terrorist's antics in

Nigeria and thereby captures international attention (Aleyomi and Nwagwu, 2020; Campbell, 2021), putting the government under pressure to act. The majority of these schoolgirls of Chibok were forced to marry and convert to Islam as a result of their abduction (Busari, 2021). Although a few of the remaining missing students have escaped and resurfaced, and fate of over 100 young women remains unknown as many are still missing (Meyer, 2021). On February 19, 2018, an offshoot of Boko Haram, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), reportedly kidnapped 111 girls from their boarding school in Dapchi city, Yobe state's northeastern region. Following negotiations with the government, the militants released about 100 girls on March 21. Unfortunately, five of the schoolgirls died while in captivity, and the only Christian among the hostages died as well, Leah Sharibu, still remains in captivity (Campbell, 2021).

On December 11, 2020, over 100 gunmen on motorcycles stormed the all-boys Government Science Secondary School in Kankara, Katsina state, kidnapped 344 students, and were later released after talks with government officials (Musawa, 2021). The government initially blamed the attack on armed criminals/bandits, but Boko Haram later claimed responsibility. On December 19, gunmen again kidnapped more than 80 Islamic school students in Katsina state just few days after Kankara abduction. All pupils were rescued by security forces after a fierce gun battle (Campbell, 2020). On January 27 and 28, 2021, armed gunmen, respectively, kidnapped 25 people (while they were returning from a wedding in northeastern Taraba state) and 50 people in Bassa community in Shiroro area of Niger state they were rescued. While the 27 January kidnapped persons were rescued on January 31 after a major police operation, there is no clarity on those who were kidnapped on the 28 January whether they were released or if the ransom was paid.

On February 15, 2021, while some bandits abducted at least 21 passengers in a bus, three days later, armed gunmen attacked Government Science College in Kagara, both in Niger state killed a student and kidnapped 24 schoolboys, three teachers and eight relatives of school staff. More so, gunmen seized 53 passengers including 20 women and nine children from a state-owned bus in Kundu village in Niger state, in which they were released four days later. On February 26, armed bandits kidnapped 317 girls from the Government Girls Science Secondary School in Jangebe town in Zamfara state (Reuters, 2021). The state of Kaduna has also seen an increase in kidnappings for ransom (Saidu et al., 2018). The Federal College of Forestry Mechanization in Mando, Kaduna State, was attacked on March 11, 2021, and 39 students, 23 females, and 16 males were kidnapped. After 55 days in captivity, they were released by their kidnappers. On April 20, 2021, Greenfield University was attacked by armed bandits and kidnapped at least 23 students and staff in Kasarami village in Kaduna state. The kidnappers demanded a ransom of \$800 million (Campbell, 2021; Isenyo, 2021).

It is worthy to note that schoolchildren and the vulnerable villagers were mostly victims of these kidnappings. Also, it is quite intriguing to mention that release of most hostages was not without payment of ransoms either in cash or exchange for the release of their members who are currently incarcerated. Some abductees were killed in the process of negotiations when the kidnappers feel the government or

family members of the hostages are not forthcoming in payment of ransom (Uzorma & Nwanegbo-Ben (2014). A case in point was the killing of 5 Greenfield University students due to the inability of the government to meet the abductors' demand. On the first of May 2021, one of the abducted students was reportedly released by the bandits after his parents paid an undisclosed ransom.

Kidnap and Ransom: Negotiations, Mode of Payment, and Impact on Hostages

In understanding the gale of kidnapping for ransom, efforts must be put not just on the victim, but also on the prospects, timelines, regions/locations, and the perpetrators' traits. It also includes a variety of negotiating participants, payment methods, and impact on the victims. This is what Sherley (2004) called the precursor, transaction, and aftermath phases. The purpose of examining abduction and ransom is to demonstrate the differences between a kidnap and a siege situation. It is worth noting, though, that there are some similarities between the two. There are also psychological factors to consider, notably in terms of kidnap "prisoner" (hostage) behavior inside strongholds.

Kidnapping remains Nigeria's most dangerous form of banditry. It has been the country's most widespread and intractable violent crime. The ease with which elements of the government enter into talks with the bandits or insurgents responsible for these crimes in order to resolve them and release the victims is perhaps the most troubling trend arising from these kidnappings and banditry in Nigeria. Understanding that dealing with these terror organizations transforms their activities into profitable companies is critical. Nothing is more disheartening than the so-called appeasement of perpetrators of kidnapping, banditry, and terror attacks on innocent people by engaging in talks with them. The interlocutors between the kidnappers and the government include some individuals like Sheik Ahmad Gumi, a Nigerian Islamic cleric/scholar who negotiates with bandits for the purpose of peace and reconciliations, and more worrisomely "repentant" bandits who had taken part in state government amnesty schemes (Ochieng and Kiriungi, 2021; Reuters, 2021).

The Guardian Editor (2021) reported that Sheikh Gumi had been advocating for amnesty for the criminals carrying out kidnappings and banditry in different parts of Northern Nigeria. Indeed, this self-appointed middleman has emerged as a contentious character in northern Nigeria's kidnap-for-ransom, which has seen more than 800 students kidnapped between 2019 and May 2021. This development is evident in Nigeria because of the failure of government in discharging its constitutional responsibilities in ensuring good governance (Meyer, 2021; Musawa, 2021; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; ThisDay, 2021). While condemning the Nigeria government for negotiating with bandits and payment of ransoms, Jibrin Samuel Kutepa (a Senior Advocate of Nigeria) observed that by paying ransom, government shows failure of governance. According to Kutepa, cited in ThisDay (2021):

Payment of ransom to bandits by government clearly shows failure of Government. Why should Government pay ransom to bandits? Why is Government not applying the full weight of the law? Government is culpable. For me, if Government is serious, it can root out bandits with the entire available arsenal in its armoury. It only requires political will, to bring the perpetrators of these heinous crimes to book. It should do it now.

The above position suggests that if the government negotiates with insurgent and bandits, it is sending out a very dangerous signal that would invariably inspire more criminals to participate in illegal and unlawful activities such as kidnapping. While in advanced countries government negotiates to save lives, this must be done deliberately and genuinely in Nigeria by avoiding lip service to security strides. Notwithstanding this stand, the government's negotiations and settlements with bandits/kidnappers are the product of a slew of unresolved underlying problems that have morphed into the current quagmire. Be that as it may, there is also the issue of the victim's immediate family. They are agitated and traumatized, fearful of the victim's death. It could be difficult to convince them to refuse ransom payment as an option to secure the release of their loved ones. This is due to a lack of confidence in government at all levels to protect people, rescue victims, arrest suspects, prosecute, and administer effective punishment. For the people, they can only solve their problems the way they see fit, as the loss will be theirs (ThisDay, 2021).

Ransom payments, which can vary from a few hundreds of dollars for ordinary individuals to thousands of dollars for high-profile victims, are an enticing inducement for organized criminal syndicates and bandits (Otu & Nnam 2018; Ochieng and Kiriungi, 2021). Family members typically pay ransoms in cash to reclaim their loved ones, while sometimes, bandits may request that portion of the payment be made in the form of airtime (phone credit) or exchange for the release of some their members initially arrested from custody. As a mode of negotiation, the perpetrators often make use of their victims' phones to contact their relatives and demand for ransoms. This is done to avoid any traces to the kidnappers' identity. Once the two parties agreed on the negotiations, the perpetrators asked the victim's family to drop off the money in a designated place before the victim is released. For instance, between 2016 and 2021, approximately 100 Chibok girls were released in exchange for about US\$3.7 million in ransoms (Campbell, 2021). Some of the remaining 176 have escaped or died, and at least 100 girls are still assumed to be held captive by Boko Haram.

From a psychological point of view, according to Alexander and Klein (2009), negotiation is important because it "buys time" to enable hostages, perpetrators, and the authorities to "cool down"; helps the authorities to clarify the motives of the perpetrator(s); assists the authorities to gather intelligence; and aids the authorities to formulate a rescue strategy (should negotiation fail). Unfortunately, from the perspective of the hostages, progress may appear to be slow, and they frequently question why the authorities do not "do something," such as forcefully rescuing them. Following up on hostages after they have been released is challenging for ethical and logistical reasons, especially if children are involved (Alexander and Klein, 2009; Otu & Nnam 2018; Uzorma & Nwanegbo-Ben (2014). Thus, forceful confrontation with the kidnappers is relatively unassertive and such action may

involve collateral damage. Much reliance is therefore placed on constructive and effective negotiation for timely and safe release.

In addition, whenever kidnapping does happen, it imposes enormous pressures be it human, financial and commercial, on those involved. While abduction and hostage taking have a long history, a systematic effort to understand the long- and short-term effects on individuals (hostages) and their families has only recently been undertaken. The psychological effects of being kidnapped are similar to those of other types of trauma, such as terrorist attacks and natural catastrophes, for both adults and children (Alexander and Klein 2009). Sexual molestation of kidnapped children is another form of traumatization of the female hostages. The abducted underage victims are often subjected to forced marriage with older husbands. It is more difficult to negotiate safe sexual behaviors with more sexually experienced guys, especially when they are under pressure to have children. Even if these children are released, the experience would have infused psychological trauma as well as physiological implications on the victim and the victim's family. Apart being forced to be circumstantial mothers, they might have contracted sexually transmitted and other related diseases (Campbell, 2021; Ibrahim and Mukhtar, 2017).

Kidnapping is also accompanied with huge economic or financial implications on the victim's family. The families of the kidnapped students of Greenfield University in Kaduna state claimed they paid N180 million and also purchased 8 new motorcycles to the kidnappers before the remaining 14 students could be released to their families (Isenyo, 2021). According to a study from Nigerian intelligence platform (SB Morgen) cited in Meyer (2021), no less than \$18 million has been paid to kidnappers between June 2011 and March 2020, with around \$11 million paid between 2016 and March 2020. In February 2021 when the Kankara boys were kidnapped, it was reported that the Katsina State Government paid N30 million (about US\$78,000) to recover the schoolboys (Meyer, 2021). Nigeria's governments have consistently denied paying ransom. Nonetheless, official denials that a ransom was paid were refuted by schoolboys and bandits involved in the Kankara kidnapping (Campbell, 2020; Musawa, 2021). Indeed, an authoritative figure might not be plausible but can only be imagined when the total number of instances is very speculative. The majority of kidnappings in Nigeria go unreported due to fear of retaliation or a lack of trust in the security agencies.

Concluding Remarks

Kidnapping for ransom is a difficult and delicate field of study because the perpetrators are unreachable and/or untrustworthy witnesses' reports. More so, there is always the possibility of re-traumatizing survivors by replaying traumatic events. The use of secondary data for this research is, however, too limited to develop a better understanding of kidnappings for ransom and how to come up with a strategy to cope with them. This chapter has, however, highlighted the current trends of kidnapping in Nigeria, considering the key perpetrators, targets of kidnappers,

geographical locations of the event, concerns linked to the motivations behind such atrocities, the impact and how individuals/hostages cope, in terms of negotiation and eventual release. While survivors of such events are known for their incredible fortitude (Alexander and Klein, 2009), there is no denying that those events can leave a lasting emotional scar and financial disturbance that can compromise patriotism to the country.

Consequently, this study discovered that in Nigeria, abduction has turned into a multimillion-naira criminal enterprise. It found that the phenomenon has grievous effects on national security. The chapter identified the armed bandits and insurgents as the key perpetrators, while the principal targets are the schoolchildren and the vulnerable people, with dominance rate in the Northern region of the country. Many security experts attribute the spike in kidnapping cases to the country's terrible political and economic status. While political economy crisis is a plausible factor, it is suffice to state that the current trend can be linked to the country's security architecture which suffers from a shortage of manpower and bad logistics. Indeed, ineffective sanctions and deterrence systems have contributed to the failure of stemming the flow of kidnapping for ransom. Act of criminality like kidnapping flourishes in a society that tolerates crime and rewards criminal opportunism and impunity over deterrent.

In summary, government should prioritize public safety, stabilize the state by avoiding legitimizing the attackers by quitting ransom payment, punishing those responsible, and removing incentives for potential attacks by showing that banditry and kidnapping do not pay. Kidnapping, in any form, should not be taken lightly. It amounts to treating kidnappers with kid gloves when government negotiates with them and eventually pays ransoms. Hence, negotiations between the government and perpetrators through their interlocutors must also come to an end. Government should also create industries to employ the teeming unemployed youths as soon as possible. Unemployment is a social issue in Nigeria, and it is linked to lack of industries. Nigerian governments should use their youths' minds and hands to contribute to national security and production by providing adequate job opportunities, rather than giving them the rest of their lives to engage in various types of socioeconomic vices as a source of income.

To combat the growing number of kidnappings, Nigeria's new anti-kidnapping strategy needs to be reviewed urgently in order to improve its effectiveness. The police and other security agents in Nigeria should be encouraged and well-equipped with modern equipment to fight kidnappers. It is unhealthy and amount to suicidal mission for the police to be given rifles to combat armed bandits with an AK-47, a rocket launcher, and other modern advanced weapons. As a result, the police's attempts to curb kidnapping activities are reduced to a cripple's effort, rendering the goal unattainable. To put an end to this threat, intelligence collection and technology must be used. In addition, there should be a public awareness and empowerment activities, new policy adaption and implementation, intensification of efforts/seamless exercise on the SIM cards registrations, community policing reforms, and a decisive halt to the spread of small and light weaponry in the country. It is expected

that by taking such measures, the security threat as it regards kidnapping for ransom will be eradicated in Nigeria, allowing for a more prosperous and productive society.

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Chapter 9

Kidnapping for Rituals in Nigeria



Samuel Oyewole and Charles E. Ekpo

Abstract Ritual motivated kidnapping is one of the most alarming criminal violence that underscored the underworld political economy of Nigeria. The beliefs in traditional, religious and superstitious power of human spirit, blood, body and/or body parts (exhumed from grave or purposively killed/murdered) to advance materialist interests such as fame, favour, power, protection, success and wealth have inspired a growing trend of kidnapping for this purpose in Nigeria and beyond. Nevertheless, this phenomenon has remained one of the least publicised, researched and understood criminal activities. This chapter examines the nature of kidnapping for ritual in Nigeria. In this process, attention is given to the evolution of this threat, its spread and concentration, actors that are involved, frequently targeted victims, strategies employed and the implications for security.

Introduction

Rituals have taken different forms across time and space. Nevertheless, rituals that require human sacrifice are considered as priceless. The phenomenon of human sacrifice existed in every culture in antiquity (Obeyesekere, 2005; Hogg, 1958; Pesthy-Simon, 2017; Hughes, 1991; Raffaele, 2008). The practices of ritual killing

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date back to, at least, four thousand years ago (Hamerton-Kelly, 1987: 163). Archeologists have shown that animal and human sacrifices were practiced by ancient cultures and civilizations in Africa, Asia, Middle East, Europe, and Americas (Mirecki and Meyer, 2002). The then dominant world view was that the world became a reality owing to the sacrifice of the gods, and “man must feed the gods by human sacrifice to sustain the universe” (Sugiyama, 2005: 37). Human sacrifice for rituals was believed to have strong values to strengthen spiritual relationship with God and attract divine blessing, as evident with the case of Abraham attempts to sacrifice his son in Christian, Jewish, and Islamic religious traditions. It was also believed to have strong potentials to appease the gods to intervene, support, redeem, or rescue individuals or society that are weak, poor, endangered, enslaved, or condemned. Many examples abound in the Jewish, Hittite, Islamic, and African among other traditions across time and space (Feder, 2011; Finsterbusch et al., 2007; Pesthy-Simon, 2017; Benkheira, 2000).

While the understanding, willingness, and/or cooperation of the “victims” to be used for rituals are necessary in some traditions, they are not required in some others. Sugiyama (2005), for instance, shows that captives of war constituted a good number of persons sacrificed in altars and pyramids of some Mesoamerican civilizations such as the Teotihuacan. The Mayas had its human sacrificial victims as fringe members of the society, war prisoners, and people kidnapped during raids (Tiesler and Cucina, 2007: 9). In some parts of Africa, there were traditions that include ritual killings of people based on their natural distinguishing features. Victims of such rituals can be selected based on family tree, or identification as twins, albino, hunchback, and virgin. In some other cases, victims of human sacrifice in Africa were unwilling cocoons, war captives, or those captured by guards that are commissioned to enforce such traditional ritual order (Oyewole, 2016a: 38). Although scientific and technological revolutions have generally advanced human civilization beyond many of the myths that were religiously, traditionally, and superstitiously constructed around ritual killing, this practice has endured into contemporary time. Although it appears to be confined to the underworld, ritual killing has become part of everyday life, which has its promoters with ends that are sometimes celebrated (Jensen and Buur, 2004: 198).

Kidnapping has become a major means of sourcing victims of ritual killing, making the phenomenon of kidnapping for ritual an important subject of interest in a country like Nigeria. In contemporary Nigeria, kidnapping has become a major source of concern in security discourses and analyses. According to The Global Economy (2021), average of 0.4 per 100,000 people were kidnapped in Nigeria between 2007 and 2013. Heard (2015: 21) notes that there were at least 1000 kidnapping incidents in Nigeria in 2012, although UNODC (2021) documented 600 incidents for same year. This is instructive of the shortage and inadequacy of reliable data on the subject matter. Forest (2012: 321) observed that over 80% of global kidnap-for-ransom cases are not reported. Cases of kidnapping in Nigeria, particularly those for ritual, are poorly reported and documented, as most of the known are merely recognized as “missing person,” of which many of them are never found. This is an aspect of kidnapping, which has received inadequate research attention

(Oyewole, 2016a), compared with the pervasive kidnapping for ransom and political concession in the Niger Delta and northern Nigeria (Badiora, 2015; Osumah and Aghedo, 2011; Oyewole, 2016b; Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021). Accordingly, this chapter interrogates the phenomenon of kidnapping for ritual, as well as its causes, evolution, strategies, concentrations, and security implications in Nigeria.

Kidnapping for Rituals: A Conceptual Discourse

Kidnapping for rituals can be deconstructed as the relationship between kidnapping and ritual sacrifice (Oyewole, 2016a: 36). This will require us to understand the concepts and contexts of kidnapping, ritual, and their connection. It is important to note, however, that there is no universally acceptable definition of these and other social science concepts. The concept of kidnapping is often used interchangeably with abduction, including in Nigeria (Igidi, 2021), although they are slightly different. Abduction is derived from the word *abduct*, which is rooted in Latin prefix *ab* (away) and verb *ducere* (to lead). This can be simply translated to mean lead away (Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021: 33). However, kidnapping is derived from the word *kidnap*, which is deconstructed into a *kid* (child) and *nap* (seize) (O'Brien, 2008, p. 13). Heard (2015) also argued that kidnapping is more elaborate in socio-economic and political intents than abduction.

Kidnapping has been defined by various scholars in extant literature, drawing from different experiences with considerable variation in variables, conditions, and intentions. Koseli et al. (2020: 1) defined kidnapping as the unlawful seizing and carrying away of a person against his or her own will with no legal right to do so. It is a phenomenon that occurs when a person is grabbed, captured, or seized, forcefully taken away and illegally confined, detained or incarcerated against his or her freely given consent by another person or organization, to use the victim (hostage) as a means or an object of bargaining with a target (which can be an individual or organization) for political and/or socio-economic benefits (Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021: 33). Moreover, Sect. 364, Chap. 77 of the Nigerian Criminal Code Act of 1990, described kidnapping as:

unlawfully imprisons of any person in such a manner as to prevent him [or her] from applying to a court for his [or her] release or from discovering to any other person the place where he [or she] is imprisoned, or in such a manner as to prevent any person entitled to have access to him [or her] from discovering the place where he [or she] is imprisoned (FGN, 1990).

The objective of this act is fundamental in understanding the concept of “kidnaping for rituals.” Kidnapping can be carried out by different actors, including individuals, bandits, terrorists, militants, insurgents, human traffickers, slave raiders and traders, pirates, baby factories and ritualists, among others (Oyewole, 2015a). Accordingly, the immediate (tactical) ends of kidnapping can be to provide a context of bargain with targeted victims, their families, organizations, and/or

government. The ultimate (strategic) objective of kidnapping is generally socio-economic and/or political ends. In terrorism, insurgency and militancy, and in some cases of social banditry, the strategic ends may be policy concession, financial reward (ransom) and prisoner swap in dialogue with government. The tactical ends can also extend to use the hostages as human resources to support their organization and campaign, and as human shield against state responses (Oyewole, 2015a, b; 2016b, c; Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021). In the case of ritual motivated kidnapping, however, a spiritual being is the targeted party in the bargain, where faith in religion, tradition, and superstition are the means to such material ends like favor, protection, power, success, and wealth (Oyewole, 2016a; also see Fig. 9.1). Accordingly, ritual is only an immediate goal (tactical ends) and not the ultimate goals of kidnapping in this case.

Rituals can be broadly defined to include actions in connection with domains of cultural practices such as sports, religion, theater, and play, and medium of power, force, and efficacy (Stephenson, 2015: 70–71). According to Victor Turner (1967: 19), ritual is a “formal behavior prescribed for occasions not given over to technological routine that have reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers.” Rituals can be understood in an overlapping categorization which Stephenson (2015: 78) has delineated to include “sacrifice, rites of passage, magic, secular ritual, interaction ritual, and seasonal rites” and liturgy that emphasize communicative meaning. They are not merely physical actions but combined with verbal and non-verbal communication, esoteric and non-esoteric knowledge, often in the context of heightened emotional states (Insoll, 2004: 10). Ritual can be found in the realms of religious, traditional, and superstitious beliefs. In these contexts, ritual sacrifices are believed to be carried out to attract good fortunes with sacrificial objects, which broadly include plants (fruits and vegetables), animals (including human), money, and services. Human sacrifice is a form of ritual with object of sacrifice ranging from full human bodies to parts such as eyes, heads, breast, genitals, teeth, eyes, intestine, and blood among others (La Fontaine 2011: 4; Oyewole, 2016a: 37). This often involves a rationalization of ritual killing which is in itself an aspect of controlled and uncontrolled sacred violence (Mack, 1987: 6).

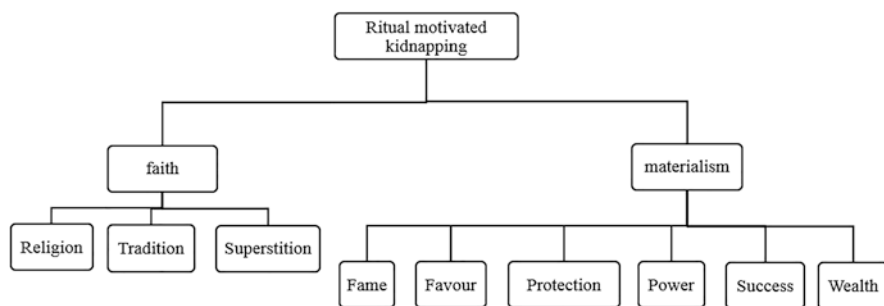


Fig. 9.1 Motivations for ritual kidnapping in Nigeria. Source: Oyewole (2016a: 40)

If kidnapping serves a particular political and socio-economic end, “kidnapping for ritual” falls within that praxis since often time the essence of human sacrifices and rituals in contemporary Nigeria is done to appease the gods or spirits to facilitate the chances and processes that would eventually culminate in political or socio-economic benefits (see Fig. 9.1). Politicians allegedly sacrifice humans and other materials to aid their victories in elections, while internet fraudsters, popularly referred to as Yahoo Boys, also sacrifice humans to enhance their “luck” (Ojie, 2006: 558). The procedure for ritual sacrifice often involved a circle, which includes “the quadrant of sacrificial victim, sacrificer, sacrificer, and recipient,” who might be “diviners, priests, prophets or possibly the gods themselves” (Lambek 2013: 2). For the purpose of this chapter, “kidnapping for rituals” is considered as “an unlawful seizure of a person in order to kill and/or sever part of his or her body for the purpose of ritual sacrifice” (Oyewole, 2016a: 37).

History of Kidnapping for Rituals in Nigeria

The history of kidnapping in Nigeria is often traced narrowly by some sources to have begun during the upsurge of militancy in the Niger Delta region (*Circuit Magazine*, 2021; Mbah, 2021; Odoemene, 2014). Some scholars also erroneously traced the history of kidnapping for rituals to the 1980s (Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019: 237). These inconsistencies arise due to the limited knowledge or sources that could provide leads to comprehensive study on the origins of kidnapping for rituals in Nigeria. Igbinovia (1988: 37) appreciates this challenge when he averred that “little is known when and how ritual killings originated in Nigeria.” But kidnapping for ritual purposes has been an age-long tradition which was pervasive across groups in the various kingdoms, empires, chiefdoms, and villages that later became Nigeria. According to Osumah and Aghedo (2011: 279), kidnapping for rituals is the oldest of all forms of kidnapping that kept manifesting “unreported for years.” Harnischfeger (2006) argued that ritual killings to win favor from the gods was a dominant practice among the Igbos of the defunct eastern Nigeria. It also featured in folklores and classic sources on Yoruba religion (Salami and Guyer, 2015: 4/13).

In his *Cannibalism and Human Sacrifice*, Hogg (1958) noted that most “tribes” in the present north-central Nigeria such as the Ataka, Tangale, Ganawuri, Rukuba, Angas, etc. performed a ritualized consumption of their foes who were captured from war:

in order to become brave; the conception being, apparently, that by eating the flesh of a slain warrior they absorbed his courage. The skulls of enemies were preserved, and when the young men first went to war, they were made to drink beer and a certain medicine from one of the skulls, with a view to making them fearless (Hogg 1958: 83).

This is similar to the tradition in Natal and Zululand where human sacrifice, including cannibalism, is used by war doctors to invoke magical powers for war advantage

(Mchunu, 2015; Turrell, 2001). This practice, as Hogg (1958: 89) commented, was also common among the Yorubas but was confined to the chiefs who had to eat either the head or heart of their predecessors in office. This resonates similar ritualized killing of some Irish kings in the era which Dalton (1970: 1) describes as “pagan times.” According to him, such killing often took place “on a particular day of the year, in a ritual manner, for religious reasons, and at the end of a fixed term of years or of some multiple of this term.”

Hunting and ritual sacrificing of twin children was also common among the pre-colonial states of the entities that later became Nigeria. In some parts of precolonial Yorubaland, as Oruene (1985) noted, twins and their parents were either banished or ritually slaughtered. This was not arbitrary as the prevailing explanation for the phenomenon of twinism found the mother culpable of an adultery with a spirit who was believed to own one of the babies. Twinism also harbored confusion of age-bracket in a society where seniority and hierarchy were valorized. Additionally, multiple birth was conceived to be demeaning since it is believed to occur among lower animals. Though the practice was jettisoned by the Yorubas in the seventeenth century (Oruene, 1985: 209), it continued among the Efik of the lower Cross River region until the late 19th and the early twentieth century. It took the efforts of Reverend Hope Waddell and King Eyo Nsa as well as the complementary efforts of Mary Slessor to finally rid the Efik society of such practice.

Most kidnapped victims who were also enslaved were often used as sacrificial lambs and were often killed during the burial ritual rites of kings and the nobles of most precolonial Nigerian societies. Describing the place of kidnapped victims and slaves in ritualism in precolonial Nigerian societies, Harnischfeger (2006: 72) recounted thus:

In some purification ceremonies, a slave was tied to a rope and dragged through every nook and corner of a village in order to take up into his dying body all the pollution that the community had accumulated. Slaves were often buried with their masters, and they also served the more profane purpose of title taking: “In the central districts of the Ibo country probably the most honorable title is that of Obu Madu, i.e. the one who has killed (his) man... The victim was securely bound to a tree and a young lad, armed with a machete, hacked off the man’s head... throughout the task he was urged on by the cheers of the assembled company.

The practice of sacrificing the kidnapped, enslaved, and strangers who had no legitimate or aboriginal claims to the polity s/he is being moved to resonates with the arguments of Bulbulia et al. (2017) that ritualized human sacrifices reflected social stratification as well as the power of the elite to kill while using religion to transfer the culpability to the gods. However, Oyewole (2016a) has argued that ritual kidnapping in precolonial Nigeria, as in most polities in Africa, was initially not done to gratify any social class but for the general good. This is premised on the assumption that human sacrifice by an individual or a group devoid of community sanction was criminalized and disapproved in African tradition. Nevertheless, private ritual sacrifices became prevalent after the penetration of capitalism and individualism across African societies. Among the Efik of Old Calabar, for instance, where capitalism had permeated its nooks and crannies since the eighteenth century, class was quite conspicuous and noble “gentlemen” could sacrifice their slaves at ease or

devoid of social appeal. It was based on such prevailing climate that slaves revolted against their masters and took a blood oath to collectively protect each other against the lust for human sacrifice by their masters (Aye, 1967: 56–57; Dike, 1956: 159).

Though kidnapping for ritual and human sacrifice was outlawed and criminalized by the colonial government, the practice persisted, though on covert arrangements. Igbinovia (1988: 37), for example, noted the prevalence of ritual kidnapping and killing by a secret cult christened *Ekpe Ikpa Ukot* (in Ibibio, translated as man leopard). This is operationalized by “seizing upon the people’s belief in lycanthropy, the murderers adopted the ‘leopard method’ of killing victims by making the murders resemble the work of leopards. The corpses were mutilated severely and marks resembling those of a leopard were disguised with raffia masks of leaves” (Igbinovia, 1988: 37). Similarly, the *Awo Opa*, *Oro*, *Egungun*, and *Agemo* secret societies were implicated in the killing of a man in Lagos in 1953. The victim was never retrieved for according to the cult members, “the remains of whatsoever Oro eats cannot be seen” (Igbinovia, 1988: 38).

Kidnapping for rituals and human sacrifice never ended with colonialism but persisted as threats to human security in Nigeria. In the 1980s, cases of ritual killings were recorded in campuses of populated institutions such as the University of Ibadan. According to Etadon (2013: 340), a case involving one Bukola Arogundade occurred on May 1981, precipitating a crisis that culminated in the killing of three female students and an aged man. Several cases and instances of kidnapping for rituals and ritual killings perpetrated in Kaduna, Warri, Ife/Modakeke, and Kwara, in the 1980s have been considerably documented (Igbinovia, 1988: 38–9). Between 1992 and 1996, official estimates suggest that 6000 individuals might have fallen victim of kidnapping for/or ritual killings in Nigeria (Harnischfeger, 2006: 61). The trend has been on the increase and kidnapping for rituals is still a potent threat that must be taken seriously, just as kidnapping for ransom, in the country. Tales of experiences of victims, survivors and witnesses of the activities of ritual-related kidnapers and killers are becoming increasingly alarming and have motivated a number of movies, of which Kumwenda (2007) has documented and painstakingly analyzed.

Spread and Concentration of Kidnapping for Rituals

Kidnapping for rituals is a phenomenon that has proliferated across the nooks and crannies of Nigeria. The belief and practice of using human parts in the “concoction of money-spinning charms, ability-to-disappear charms, gun-proof charms” and other purposes is gaining momentum (Ojie, 2006: 558). Incidents of kidnapping for rituals are often carried out and reported in the media mostly as cases of missing persons whose corpses may or may not be eventually discovered. In some cases, the discovery of the personal effects of victims such as clothes, shoes, handbags, identity cards, missing automobiles among others are the indicators or “evidence” to suggest that the person could have fallen victim to kidnapers who could have used him/her for ritual purposes. Ritual killing of kidnapped victims often takes place at

places like shrines and designated spots which could be disguised in/within the fringes of settlement areas or forest and ungoverned areas (Olaniyan, 2017; Ayodele, 2017). Olaniyan (2017: 8) mapped recent ritual killing dens in Nigeria to include Ogwugwu shrine in Okija forest, Anambra, where 50 decomposing bodies and 20 skulls were discovered in 2004; a ground tunnel located in Ijebu Ode, Osun; an enclave in Soka forest in Ibadan, containing several decomposing bodies, skulls and victims yet to be slain; a forest at Adigbe, in Abeokuta, Ogun; a forest close to Iwaro village near Ipetumodu, Ife, Osun; and Inyi forest in Igbo Eze, Enugu. Ojie (2006: 558) observed that the trade in human parts is booming unprecedented as kidnapping for ritual has been escalating.

The 2020 report of the SB Morgan Intelligence suggests that Rivers, Kaduna, Delta, Bayelsa, and Borno recorded most kidnapping cases with 120, 117, 95, 85, and 82 incidents, respectively (Morgen, 2020: 2). The position of respondents in the 2017 NOI Polls on the prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria could also be used to infer the spread of the phenomenon across the 6 geopolitical zones of the country. According to the survey, 74% of the respondents in the South-West, 68% in North-Central, 65% in South-South, 60% in South-East and 43%, and 33% in North-West and North-East, respectively, admitted that kidnapping is prevalent in Nigeria (Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019: 239–40). One of the closest efforts in tracing the spread of kidnapping in Nigeria was done by Badiora (2015) but his data was exclusively collected from police records, which are silent about ritual-related incidents. Based on his method of study, which covered 2005 and 2010, incidents of kidnapping have been less recorded in northern region (5 cases [1.6%]), followed by western Nigeria (with just 7 cases [2.3%]) and eastern Nigeria (with 110 cases [35.8%]). The middle belt recorded the highest incidents (60.3%) with a total number of 185 cases. These figures barely reflect the situation on ground and are further limited by the researcher's decision to randomly pick states to represent his "created" regions. But generally, tracking the spread of kidnapping for rituals in Nigeria is very difficult. There is paucity of data on the general state of insecurity in the country. Data available in police records, as we have earlier noted, contradict those from other sources which are generally based on reported cases by news and social media. Tracing the concentration of kidnapping, therefore, becomes a noble dream.

The under-reportage or under-tracking of kidnapping incidents is not peculiar to Nigeria. Most kidnap cases across the world, Forest (2012) has argued, are not reported. The Nigerian case, however, is blamed on the ambivalence that exists between the civilian and security personnel as well as the corruption and rot which characterize the country's security sector (Ololajulo, 2017; Ayodele, 2017). Some empirical studies have shown that some police personnel, often time, manipulate criminal records and even leak intelligence to criminal networks at the peril of citizens who trust the police with such information. Consequently, Nigerians are held by trepidation from offering help to victims of crimes, including ritual killings (Osumah and Aghedo, 2010: 140). Sources also point toward the unholy alliance between politicians, "powerful people," personnel of internal security agencies, and kidnappers, armed robbers, and ritual killers (Smith, 2001; Harnischfeger, 2006; Osumah and Aghedo 2010). This breeds distrust as security personnel are adjudged

to be dangerous as kidnappers. The fact that most rituals are performed in shrines of which the police cannot access (Ayodele, 2017: 4) as well as forests and ungoverned spaces (Lenshie et al., 2020; Olaniyan, 2017) is also considered a factor which limits the availability of data to successfully track and document ritual kidnapping.

Based on available data from various media sources, ritual based on human sacrifice and related kidnapping are mostly concentrated in the southern part of Nigeria. Infamous hotspots of kidnapping for rituals in the country include Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti, Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Delta, and Edo States. However, the menace is not limited to the south, it fairly widespread across the country. Many cases have been reported in northern states, prominently in Kwara, Benue, Bauchi, Plateau, Niger, Nasarawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, and Zamfara States as well as the Federal Capital Territory. Moreover, more publicity of ritualist activities in the south than the north may be related to concentration of most national media houses in Lagos and other southern states. This is important for underworld activities like ritual kidnapping and killing that thrive on secrecy. In essence, it is fair to argue that nowhere is too safe for ritualist threats across Nigeria.

Actors in Kidnapping for Rituals: Perpetrators and Victims

The menace of kidnapping for rituals, like in related crimes, can occur with individual or organizational actors. At the simplest level, an individual can seize, dismember, and use a victim for ritual on his/her own with little or no help from another person. This requires the perpetrator to have the strength to overpower or the capacity to lure the victim, and prior knowledge of the details of the ritual procedure, with little or no help. In this context, the victim is often known and related to perpetrator, as a friend and family member. This accounts for most cases of ritual kidnapping, deformation and killing of child, wife, fiancé, husband, girlfriend, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle cousin, niece, neighbor, and other acquaintance.

At advanced level of kidnapping for ritual are organized actors. Like in related crimes, organized actor is a group of individuals that are bound in simple or complex interactions (Oyewole, 2015c). In this case, the simplest organization can be described as a group of few individuals, often between two and ten, which consciously work together to better their lots by playing different roles in ritual procedure that involve kidnapping. Perhaps except the ritual priest or definer, most of the team members require limited skills to perform their roles. This form of organization is contractual and less enterprise-based actor in kidnapping for ritual, as it exists mainly for the purpose of specific client/s at a point in time. Moreover, the operation of the group is often limited to a specific community, city, state and at best its immediate environment. In this case, victim/s can be known neighbors or unknown strangers in theater of operation.

The most complex of organization is evident in the most sophisticated actors that engage in ritual kidnapping and killing. This is often a network, which include a group of dedicated gang/s of kidnappers, selected ritual spots and priests, as well as

their sponsors and benefactors. In this case, kidnapping in Nigeria has generally become a huge and burgeoning business with “investors” spreading across different sectors of the society (Campbell, 2020). Several persons have featured as primary, secondary, and shadow parties or stakeholders. While the primary perpetrators are those that are physically present at the tactical and operational levels of kidnappings, the secondary perpetrators include individuals off the field who have direct relationship with the primary actors. The primary perpetrators include “one chance” drivers and their accomplices, agents of “YahooYahoo+,” political thugs commissioned to abduct victims for ritual purposes, and other agents who hunt for victims in the field. Some herbalists also leave their shrine to hunt for victims in order to harvest organs and body parts. Primary perpetrators either violently abduct or lure their victims to locations where they are eventually used for ritual purposes. The strike team may be armed with knife, dagger, and at best gun. The secondary participants include herbalists, yahoo boys, pastors, Imams, and local politicians, who rather than hitting the field themselves, commission primary perpetrators to embark on the hunt and make deliveries of human victim/s or the needed parts of bodies for sacrifices.

The shadow parties may have direct or indirect relationships with primary and secondary parties. These often involve top politicians and business moguls who sponsor, benefit from, use organs harvested from victims and the diabolic powers generated thereof, and could protect primary and secondary parties from the public and security agencies. The shadow parties will protect their identity at all cost. They are often highly placed men in the society whose connection with perpetrators is only suspected based on their display of sympathy and assistance to exposed and arrested primary/secondary perpetrators. Smith (2001: 816-17) documented a case of Innocent Ekeanyanwu who was arrested after his ritual den was discovered in Owerri in 1996. However, he was murdered in police custody to the bewilderment of the public who protested massively against the alleged cover-up and possible protection of a shadow party who must have sponsored his activities. Also, in 2000, Prophet Edward Okeke (alias Eddy) was arrested in Onitsha for allegedly killing 93 men and 16 babies for ritual purposes. His charms were believed to be so powerful that it took the intervention of the Bakassi Boys and not state security institutions to arrest him. However, the then governor of Anambra state, Dr. Mbadinuju and the former head of state, Gen. Ibrahim Babangida tried to prevent the Bakassi Boys from executing the ritualists (Harnischfeger, 2006: 60), hence fueling suspicion of relationship between the culprit and the political class.

Victims of kidnapping for rituals cut across all societal sectors. There are no excluded gender, age, class and people in target of ritual procedure and related kidnapping. Men (both young and old), children, women as well as the deformed and the virgins are targeted. Men and women with hunchback are increasingly being aimed at (Igbinovia, 1988: 38). As victims of “evil forces” (Ndlovu, 2016), people with disability are also marked for abduction and albinism has steadily become a pearl to kidnappers for rituals (Ndlovu, 2016: 35). Sex workers are also becoming easy preys and are easily lured to hotels and other locations where they are seized, killed, and mutilated (Aborisade, 2018; Onuoha, 2014). Close relation is not even a

course of immunity. According to Dolapo Badmus, a police public relations officer, “yahoo boys now kill and use their girlfriends even their mothers to perfect their ritual dealings” (WomanNg, 2018). In summary, no one, and nowhere is too safe from the threat of kidnapping for ritual in Nigeria.

Patterns and Strategies of Kidnapping for Rituals

The patterns and strategies of kidnapping largely depend on the actors that are involved. At individual level, the operation of the actor is often limited to perpetrator’s neighborhood or community and the immediate environment. The victims and perpetrators are in most cases related or acquaintance. Hence, ritualists’ strategy of kidnapping, utilization, deformation and killing of a targeted victim usually involves coercion, deceit, charm, or their combination. In this case, victims can be captured or lured within and from their own house awake or asleep. There are cases where the perpetrator will declare the victim dead or missing, in order not to arouse suspicion of their complicity. Children are often lured with consumable and money into ritualists’ traps. Friends are often lured by potential perpetrators with invitation to visit, journey, and party with them.

Kidnapping for ritual that involves organized actors is as elaborate as it is in the case of ransoming. It assumes a forceful and illegal abduction of a victim at locations that are considered to be strategic to the abductors. Such preferred areas may be remote or isolated, as the “ungoverned spaces” apostles would argue, and could also be open, busy, or densely populated areas (see Sunday, 2017). In kidnapping generally, the process follows six stages which includes: “target selection, planning, deployment, attack, escape, and exploitation” (Onouha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019: 242). In ritual kidnapping victims are always hypnotized, charmed, and rendered unconscious by abductors at point of seizure (Oyewole, 2016a: 37). In addition, one of the most popular strategies in ritual kidnapping is the use of “one chance” vehicles in public spaces. Here, drivers of commercial vehicles hit the road with a diverse collection of accomplices disguising as passengers to lure and whisk away innocent victims in their conscious state. Describing the “one chance” strategy, Eghagha (2017) commented thus:

...the notion of ‘one chance’, a practice in which a commercial vehicle would drive to a bus stop and announce to intending commuters that there is only one seat left. The message is that the bus is set to go. Often it is the sign of ritual kidnapers, a ploy to get desperate passengers and lure them to death.

“One chance” vehicles are often different in form and registration to the generally approved pattern by public transportation regulation authorities. They may also collect or offer to collect “far lesser than the regular pay” (Johnson, 2018). Other strategies for kidnapping for rituals include the use of cultural activities as a cover or justification to abduct supposed “strangers” who may not be indigenes or aboriginal to such festivals; the use of strategic ritual dens or spots as venues or locations for

networking and job interviews; and the luring of unsuspecting victims to hotels and religious sites, including churches and mosques, through virtual and face-to-face interactions (Okoli, 2019; Johnson, 2018; Eghagha, 2017). In 2017, online service delivery agents were lured to areas where they were murdered for ritual. In many cases, students and sex workers are invited to parties where they merry but never return. Ritual kidnappers, in popular and densely populated areas, also disguise as mad people (Odita, 2017) to further appear unsuspecting to the members of the public.

Victims of ritual kidnapping can end up deformed or dead. Most attention has been on ritual killing and not deformation (Smith, 2001; Oyewole, 2016a). Victims of ritualism can end up with physical, mental, and spiritual deformations. The physical deformation can manifest in form of blindness, deafness, paralysis, sickness, and live decaying. The mental deformation can take the form of madness, insanity, or behavioral instability and uncertainty. Spiritual deformation is all encompassing, it can manifest invisible or unexplainable torment and calamity, which can materialize as medical, psychological, financial, marital, and social conditions in a victim. Ritual wealth or power of some perpetrators can be hidden in the live challenges of their victims, such as failure, unsuccessful relationship or marriage, poverty, barrenness, and miscarriage. The assumption is that the higher the live challenges of the victim, the higher the benefits for the perpetrators.

More alarming, significant number of ritual victims are murdered, and often buried by the culprits to destroy evidence (see Oluwole, 2017). The few corpses of victims that are eventually found often possess some symbolic indicators which portray the art and act of ritualism in pattern and nature of violence bequeathed the victim, and the kind of instruments utilized to perpetuate such violence. Common weapon includes machete, knife, sword, ax, dagger, scissors, rod, and other sharp metals which are used to amputate and sever victim's body parts. Screw driver is also applied to plug off victim's eyes (Igbinovia, 1988: 38). Sophisticated kidnap gang can also employ gun to threaten or coerce targeted victims to cooperate at the points of seizure, in transit or ritualist's den. Bodies of victims are often found without head and other symbolic parts such as eyes, intestine, eyes, nose, tongue, arms, sex organs, breasts, and some vital internal organs such as the heart, lungs, kidney, among others. Sometimes, means, such as refrigeration (Aghedo, 2015: 147), are utilized to exsanguinate and preserve parts before their symbolic usage.

As discussed in some other chapters of this book, ritual motivated kidnappers are also involved in baby factories and ransoming. Ritualists have generally developed the strategy of maintaining religious centers, orphanages, hospitals or maternity homes, dens of baby factory, mortuaries, and cemeteries. Ritualists operate religious centers, such as churches, mosques or Islamic schools, to maintain pull of potential victims or disguise their activities. Ritualist's hospital, maternity home and baby factory supply network of buyers with young babies, their placentas and hairs, as well as the water and blood of delivery mothers as it may be required. This kind of mortuary and cemetery also sever and supply body parts of the dead. Of specific interest is baby factory, which often involves kidnapping of young girls, who will be raped and forced to give birth to babies for sale to ritualists. Some of

these young girls can be kept in captivity as reproductive machines for years (see Onuoha, 2014).

Ritualist's activities have become a multimillion-naira enterprise in Nigeria. In some cases, kidnappers will negotiate and receive ransom over a victim, and thereafter use or sell the hostage and/or relevant body parts for ritualism. The ransom can be requested in form of airtime or money to be dropped in a lonely spot of the road. The ransom can range from a couple of thousand to tens of millions in naira, depending on the value of the victim, the relative capacity to pay and the organizational sophistication of the perpetrators. The price of human victim in ritual market can range from tens of thousands to tens of millions in naira, depending on the strength of the buyer and seller, and their locations. Finally, human body parts can be sold between a couple of thousands and millions in naira (Oyewole, 2022). These always allow the perpetrators of ritual kidnapping and related activities to profit from multiple fronts.

Security Implications

Nigeria is presently enmeshed in a plethora of security challenges, which plagues all the states of the federation with serious repercussions for politics, environment, economy, education, social and other sectors. Ethno-religious conflicts, electoral violence, police brutality as well as riots and uprisings have become defining features of Nigeria's security landmark. In addition, the activities of Boko Haram insurgents, armed bandits, and militants have threatened the Nigerian state's sovereignty and stretched its security apparatuses which are arguably ill prepared and equipped for these challenges (Offiong and Ekpo, 2020; Ekpo et al., 2018; Omotola and Alumona, 2016; Oriola et al., 2021; Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021). It is in the midst of these multidimensional security crises that kidnapping has a profitable enterprise for insurgent, bandits, ritualists, fraudsters (419 scams) and baby factories across the country (Oyewole, 2016b).

The escalation of kidnapping for ritual has complicated the security situation in Nigeria and has taken its toll on human life and the economy. Considering security from the context of human security—which covers politics, health, economic, personal, community, environment, and food securities (UNDP, 1994)—kidnapping for rituals has negatively affected no fewer than five of these seven dimensions. There is a high level of trepidation which has negative effects on the economy. The fear of being kidnapped for ritual purposes threatens night life and the sectors that depend on it for patronage. Parents would prefer to send their children to schools within the neighborhood to reduce the chances of their wards falling victims to ritual kidnappers. The effect is that choices may not be calculated by merit but security advantages.

Kidnapping is naturally a form of violence against the victim. But kidnapping for rituals evokes violence and damages in a multidimensional form. Victims of ritual kidnapping are most likely to be killed, dismembered, deformed, dehumanized, and

demonized. Victims of ritualism are not just killed, but their bodies are left in deformed in manner that may be difficult to identify, and quite disrespectful and dehumanizing, especially in the African sense. Ritual victims whose bodies are disposed by the ritualists are often less recognizable and perpetually considered to be “missing” by their family members, thereby sustaining hopelessness within the ambience of hope for a possible reunion. Moreover, the assumption is that the spirit of victims of money and related rituals don’t rest in peace, but are demonized to work in the parallel world, shadow or kingdom of the dark, which is physically unknown, in order to remit the reward for their clients or sponsor. This often invokes the feeling of spiritual insecurity for the victim of ritual kidnapping, deformation, and killing among their surviving relatives (Nwolise, 2013).

As of September 2019, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) documented 22,000 cases of missing persons in northeast Nigeria between 2009 and 2019 (ICRC, 2019). Cases of unfound missing persons foment a generational or “time violence” (Ekpo and Ogunnoiki, 2020), which may haunt the families of victims for generations. Some of the abducted victims were breadwinners of their families with long chain of implications for their dependents. They may be fathers/mothers to children, husbands to wives and vice versa, brothers and sisters to siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, among other things. Their sudden disappearance often creates an interregnum of uncertainty which might climax in economic, personal, health, and food insecurities for surviving relatives. This may force the affected family to drop out of school and sink into abject poverty and anti-social behaviors. The desperation by such families to survive could push them into illegitimate means or self-help that may further complicate national security. If the number of persons in an average family is pegged at five, the disappearance of 22,000 people (in northern Nigeria alone), to go by ICRC’s (2019) data, directly affects the socio-economic and psychological wellbeing of 110,000 persons. This could even be more considering the broad and extended nature of Nigerian families and web of dependents which spread from cities to villages and ancestral lands.

For the kidnapped victims that eventually escape from ritualists’ dens, the psychological trauma lives and haunts them for years. Narrating her ill-experience in a ritual den, Mrs. Patience Igbo noted that “it was like a nightmare but I experienced it and survived... I will not wish my worst enemy to go through what I passed through because it was so traumatizing” (Ejoh and Ligali, 2014). Similar stories, tales, and narratives are recounted by other victims who experienced first-hand violence with its attendant post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The fact that “there is neither definite hotspot of operation and targeted victims, nor a profile of the perpetrators” (Oyewole, 2016a: 45) further complicates the vulnerability of the masses who may not be able to detect nor device measures to checkmate such threats.

The unfortunate popularity of human sacrifice as a means of escaping poverty poses a great deal of a threat to human security, as many would embrace the act, especially in the ageing Nigerian economy. According to Smith (2001), the want of human head in Nigeria for the preparation of “juju” is becoming popular with tolls on the lives of innocent and vulnerable children and women. Consequently, child

kidnapping with ritual murder, and ritual murder with black magic to obtain wealth and power is widespread in Nigeria (Smith, 2001: 809). If left unchecked, with committed responses and full capacity of the peoples and government of Nigeria, the present trend is a pointer that future generations across the nooks and crannies of the country will tend to accept and practice human sacrifice-based ritualism and associated crimes as a normal way of life.

The continued existence and prevalence of ritual kidnapping demonstrates the incapacity of the Nigerian security apparatuses to detect, deter, and foreclose the occurrence of such crimes. As Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene (2019: 253) argued, the manifestation of such crimes in the midst of chains of securities “contributes to gradual erosion of public trust and confidence on the institutions of the state, especially the police.” The complicity of the security agencies, as we noted earlier, also portrays the complexity of the situation and the nature of challenge it poses. Mrs. Patience Igbo, in her account, recounted how she screamed for help at a security checkpoint, but the police and her abductors ended up sharing pleasantries (Ejoh and Ligali, 2014). This is a worrisome trend that must not be taken lightly. There is an overriding need to devise policy strategies to minimize and contain the threat of kidnapping for rituals in Nigeria.

Conclusions and Implications for Policy

In this chapter, we have attempted to analyze the phenomenon of kidnapping for rituals. While tracing the evolution of this practice, the chapter attempted to connect the nexus between its causal, epistemological, and ontological roots. It identified the challenge of producing and accessing reliable data, which betrays efforts at precisely tracking the spread and concentration of ritual kidnapping. The strategies adopted by ritual kidnappers and the actors involved were also explored. These enabled us to make inferences on the nature of security threat posed by this social problem. We therefore conclude that, unlike other forms of kidnapping, kidnapping for rituals directly threatens and affects human, as against state security. Most victims of ritual abduction are the poor and vulnerable who use and seek cheap public transportation, are desperate for jobs and networking, would seek opportunities without calculating risks, would leave their houses without security personnel, and would trade themselves as sex workers. This is not to suggest that the wealthy are entirely insulated from this threat. But cases of kidnapping of the upper class for ritual is limited compared with the experience of the poor masses in the hands of ritual abductors or the rich’s agony in the hands of kidnappers for ransom.

The aforementioned may explain the failure of the political elites to securitize the threat of kidnapping for rituals as against that of ransom. The sluggish nature which security agencies often react to distress calls and reports of missing persons suggests that such aspect of threat is not a priority, probably because it does not have a direct impact on state’s or national stability. The ICRC report cited above indicates too many cases of missing persons that is yet to be solved by the state security

agencies. This suggests that combating the threat of kidnapping for ritual must assume some preventive and pre-emptive strategies than a reactive one. This is because the number of security personnel per the total population of Nigeria is dwarfed.

David Osmand, in his *Securing the State*, identified three approaches to security viz. prevention, protection, and resilience (Omand, 2010). The government must make efforts at boosting the economy and pursuing policies that will enable wealth and prosperity creation as against poverty reduction. Since one of the motivations for human sacrifice is power and wealth, alternative and scientific means to wealth acquisition will definitely discourage diabolism. Efforts must be invested in the gathering of data and intelligence so as to identify and fortify security in ritual hotspots and concentrations. Adequate data will also help to trace the spread of this malady as well as proffer more scientific solutions. Security agencies must be more responsive in concern and action to the plights of cases of missing person, irrespective of the social status of the victim. Since it may be impossible to detect all ritualists, their dens, and operations, it is best to build the capacity of the citizenry to face and maneuver themselves out of such situations. In addition, responsive security situation is required to support (potential) victims or survivors. Social welfare institutions at the state and local government levels must make provisions and palliatives available to families of victims who have a network of dependents (Aleyomi and Nwagwu, 2020). The masses should also be armed with information on best steps to take as victims and families of victims to improve the chances of rescuing victims from ritual dens.

Importantly, aggressive efforts must be made to demonize the practice of ritual killing. The media, school, religious bodies, community leaders, and civil society must take up this task of educating prospective kidnap actors and stakeholders on the vainness of such barbaric act. They must be made to understand that such antediluvian practice has no place in modern society. The state needs to raise the cost of human sacrifice and related rituals above benefit, through timely and effective security response, trial, and punishment of the perpetrators. The government of Nigeria needs to improve governance of the population and territorial spaces considered as ungovernable. In this case, there is need for effective forest management and regulations of traditional/religious practices and sites. These, among others, are vital to curb ritual kidnapping and improve human security in Nigeria.

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Chapter 10

Kidnapping and Baby Factory in Nigeria



Freedom C. Onuoha, Christopher Ewuzie Obianagwa, and Ndubuisi Isaac

Abstract The recognition of kidnapping as one of the major security threats is not unconnected to its unprecedented expansion in frequency, sophistication and spread in recent times in Nigeria. It has been perpetrated for vengeance (as a political or terrorist strategy), ritual (power and influence) and exploitation (ransom or sexual) in Nigeria. Accordingly, literature on kidnapping in Nigeria have mostly focused on its adoption by terrorist organisations as political tool, indulgence by ritualists for power and influence, and perpetration by criminal gangs to receive ransom. Nevertheless, there is little or no scholarly attempt to interrogate the appropriation of kidnapping for the purposes of operating or sustaining baby factory. Yet, this form of organised crime is growing in scale and sophistication in Nigeria. Baby factory generally refers to a practice in which some unmarried women and girls are harboured in confinements and encouraged, deceived or forced to become pregnant and subsequently give up their babies for sale after delivery. This chapter, therefore, examines how kidnapping is implicated in baby factory operations in Nigeria. In particular, it interrogates its political economy underpinnings, drivers and effects on contemporary Nigerian society. The analysis draws from desk research and field-work on baby factory operation conducted by the first author in South Eastern Nigeria, between December 2014 and April 2020. This was complemented by data mining from media reports on the subject matter.

Introduction

The prevalence, if not escalation, of organised crime such as pipeline vandalism, kidnapping, piracy, and internet fraud, among others, is a prominent feature of the internal security landscape of Nigeria since the return to democracy in May 1999. The Nigerian government has undertaken several measures, including strategic, security and law enforcement interventions, to tackle these evolving security

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challenges (Oshita et al., 2019). In 2014, for instance, President Goodluck Jonathan signed and launched Nigeria's first-ever *National Security Strategy* to serve as the overarching framework for a holistic and more coordinated response to security challenges in the country. The desire is to make 'Nigeria a violence-free, safe, peaceful, self-reliant, prosperous and strong nation' (National Security Strategy, 2014, p. 1). The *National Security Strategy* produced by Muhammadu Buhari's administration in 2019 similarly, if somewhat more ominously, highlights broad categories of security threats confronting Nigeria:

These include terrorism and violent extremism; armed banditry, kidnapping and militancy; cybercrimes; transnational organised crime; insecurity in other domains; potential threats from Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive (CBRNE) agents; and national disasters (National Security Strategy, 2019, p. 18).

The recognition of kidnapping as one of the major security threats is not unconnected to its unprecedented expansion in frequency, sophistication and spread in recent times in Nigeria. The Street Journal (2013) noted that the rate of kidnapping in Nigeria had risen considerably in the past 10 years as not less than 1500 people were kidnapped on an annual basis. A February 2017 public opinion survey revealed that majority of Nigerians (60%) agreed that kidnapping is pervasive in Nigeria (NOIPolls., 2017). Currently, no part of Nigeria is immune to the scourge.

Kidnapping has been perpetrated for vengeance (as a political or terrorist strategy), ritual (power and influence), and exploitation (ransom or sexual) in Nigeria (Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Umego, 2019). Of all the different types, kidnapping for ransom has become the most common during which known and unknown targets are entrapped by a gang and taken to their den, followed by deployment of different extractive strategies aimed at procuring a ransom from the relations of the kidnapped (Tade et al., 2020). It is estimated that between June 2011 and March 2020, Nigerians paid kidnappers about \$18.34 million in ransom. About 60% of this was paid out between January 2016 and March 2020 alone, indicating a spike in recent years (SBM Intelligence, 2020). Consequently, literature on kidnapping in Nigeria has mostly focused on its adoption by terrorist organisations as political tool, indulgence by ritualists for power and influence, and perpetration by criminal gangs to receive ransom (Okolie-Osemene and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Oyewole, 2016; Ngwama, 2014).

Despite the copious literature on kidnapping in Nigeria, there is little or no scholarly attempt to interrogate the appropriation of kidnapping for the purposes of operating or sustaining baby factory. Yet, this form of organised crime is growing in scale and sophistication in Nigeria. Baby factory generally refers to a practice in which some unmarried women and girls are harboured in confinements and encouraged, deceived or forced to become pregnant and subsequently give up their babies for sale after delivery (Onuoha, 2014; Makinde 2016). In some cases, unmarried pregnant girls or women are promised healthcare, only for their babies to be taken away. In others, young girls are raped and made pregnant for the sole purpose of giving birth to babies that are sold afterwards.

Although the first publicly reported case of a baby factory was in 2006 (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2006), the practice gained wider visibility when the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) raised alarm over the booming baby trafficking in Nigeria in 2011. It disclosed then that in the lucrative but inhuman business, a baby is sold between ₦350,000 and ₦450,000 depending on the sex (Omonobi, 2013). There have been several raids by security and law enforcement officials on those illicit centres to apprehend the operators and rescue the victims. Notwithstanding successful security raids and ongoing prosecution of some criminal suspects, the practice of baby factory has not only persisted but has also increased in operational scale and geographical spread in Nigeria with consequences for the victims and society. Meanwhile the lucrative business enables other criminal activities such as child-snatching, child stealing and child trafficking in Nigeria, and it profits from them.

This chapter, therefore, examines how kidnapping is implicated in baby-factory operations in Nigeria. In particular, it interrogates its political economy underpinnings, drivers and effects on contemporary Nigerian society. The analysis draws from desk research and fieldwork on baby-factory operation conducted by the first author in Southeastern Nigeria, between December 2014 and April 2020. This was complemented by data mining from media reports on the subject matter.

This chapter is divided into seven sections. After providing a clarification of the concept of kidnapping and baby factory as understood in this chapter, the next section presents an overview of the outbreak and prevalence of baby factory in Nigeria. This is followed by a political economy synopsis of the phenomenon of kidnapping for baby factory. The succeeding sections highlighted the factors contributing to the prevalence of baby factory, the effects of kidnapping for baby factory, efforts of government in combating it and concluding reflections.

Conceptual Clarification

This chapter revolves around several terms, but the concept of kidnapping and baby factory are so pivotal that they merit clarification. For the purposes of aiding clarity, a conceptual overview of the terms will be undertaken in order to gain a shared understanding of their usage in this chapter.

Kidnapping

Kidnapping is a term that is used with increasing frequency, yet without universally agreed definitions. Scholars and state have given different definitions of the term. Inyang and Abraham (2013, p. 532), for instance, define kidnapping as ‘the forcible seizure, taking away and unlawful detention of a person against his/her will. It is a common law offence and the key part is that it is an unwanted act on the part of the

victim'. Similarly, Greenawalt (1989, p. 92) defines kidnapping as 'the unlawful removal of someone and confine him or her in isolation, and a situation of false imprisonment, to restrain the victim unlawfully, usually accomplished by threat of force that coerces him to stay where he is directed'.

The act of kidnapping or abduction constitutes a crime under the Nigerian legal system and international law. The act is prohibited in Section 273 of the Penal Code, Section 364 of the Criminal Code (1990) and Section 11 of Terrorism Prevention Act (2011) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. For instance, Section 364 of Nigeria's Criminal Code clearly criminalises such act, stating that:

any person who unlawfully imprisons any person, and takes him out of Nigeria without his consent; or unlawfully imprisons any person within Nigeria in such a manner as to prevent him from applying to court for his release or from discovering to any person the place where he is imprisoned, or in such a manner as to prevent any person entitled to have access to him from discovering the place where he is imprisoned; is guilty of a felony, and is liable to imprisonment for 10 years (Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990).

In other words, kidnapping or abduction involves unlawful seizures, detention and deprivation of personal liberty of a person against his/her will within or outside the territory of Nigeria. The foregoing suggests that kidnapping involves a situation where a person(s) is deceptively, unlawfully or forcefully taken into custody by another person or group of persons and confined against his or her consent, with the aim of exploiting the possession of the victim(s) for an illicit gain or benefit—money, attention, materials, power, gratification and influence, among others.

Often, victims of kidnapping are taken away from the place they know or were seized to other places they do not know or wish to be. They can also be lured or deceived to arrive at a location and thereafter detained. Victims are usually denied access to communication, unless arranged or approved by the kidnappers. Thus, the defining elements of kidnapping include seizure of a victim, unlawful detention or concealment of the victim, and denial or restriction of the victim's wilful access to communication. The act may result in the death of the victim, during the process of abduction, in captivity or even after being freed by the kidnappers.

In this way, kidnapping is generally recognised as a threat to human security. Consequently, a state takes actions to neutralise or minimise the threats of abduction within its jurisdiction. In this case, Nigeria has adopted several legislative, punitive, and security measure to combat the scourge of kidnapping. Yet, the threat of abduction for economic or sexual exploitation persists in the country, including for the purposes of sustaining baby-factory operation.

Baby Factory

As with kidnapping, the concept of baby factory has gained significant currency in usage by government officials, media practitioners, scholars and security agents in discourses on human trafficking in Nigeria. The term has also been used interchangeably with 'baby farming' or 'baby harvesting'. Yet, there is neither a legal

definition for these terms nor standard definition of the term that is generally agreed upon by its diverse users.

Huntley (2013, p. 10), therefore, argues that the terms ‘are used by journalists to describe criminal activities in Nigeria involving restriction of a person’s movement against such person’s will, forced impregnations, sale of babies and illegal adoptions’. In this wise, Mba (cited in Omonobi, 2013, p. 5) defines it as ‘locations where young ladies or girls, some teenagers or little above that, are harboured and deliberately encouraged or forced to become pregnant and subsequently give up their babies for sale’. Similarly, Eseadi et al. (2015, p. 2) conceives baby factory as a structure which

serves as avenue for human trafficking, abuse and sexual violence and where pregnant women and vulnerable females involved in this inhumane act are usually provided with forcibly restrained accommodation and maternal care during the period of the pregnancy, but after delivery, are paid to abandon their babies who are then sold to couples or other buyers desiring children.

Although those who use the term do not agree on a single definition, a loose consensus has emerged that a baby farm or factory is any accommodation or operation where mostly pregnant girls or women are kept with or without their consent, or young girls are encouraged or forced to become pregnant, for the purpose of giving birth to babies that are sold to diverse clients (Onuoha, 2014). The operation of ‘baby factory syndicates typically comprise networks of business merchants, medical doctors, nurses, and mid-wives’ (Ojedokun and Atoi, 2016, p. 47). Thus, the activity often takes place in an accommodation, buildings or houses usually camouflaged as maternity centres, herbal clinics, orphanages or compassionate homes where unwanted pregnant women or girls are harboured until their delivery.

Makinde et al. (2015) maintain that the existence of baby factories across the country translates into the perpetration and occurrence of illegitimate activities such as baby breeding, rape, forced impregnations, sale of babies, illegal adoptions and even human trafficking. In a sense, baby factory serves as an avenue for human trafficking, exposing young girls and expectant mothers as well as the infants to abuse and violence. In sum, baby factory is a form of organised crime involving restriction of a person’s movement against such person’s will, forced impregnations, sale of babies and illegal adoptions (Huntley, 2013; Onuoha, 2014).

Evolutionary Trajectory of Kidnapping for Baby Factory in Nigeria

As earlier noted, the phenomenon of baby factory in Nigeria has been variously described as ‘baby farming’ or ‘baby harvesting’. Its existence came to the limelight in 2006, when Ben Ezinma, the Programme Manager of the Child Rights Network (CHIRN), drew the attention of Abia State Government to the sale of babies by some unscrupulous persons (Madike, 2013). Those allegedly involved in the

baby-factory business operate under the guise of orphanages, maternity and motherless babies' homes. This situation raises concern over the level of regulation and supervision of these outfits (Onuoha, 2015).

The baby-factory business initially followed a common pattern in which pregnant teenagers or women with unwanted pregnancies approached doctors, clinics, nurses or orphanages that subsequently took care of them during their pregnancies. When the babies were eventually born, they were sold to childless couples (Okosun, 2014, personal communication). This practice did not immediately attract public attention because young girls with unwanted pregnancies sneak into such homes to give birth to their babies undetected. The intention of such girls was to hide the pregnancy from their parents and society to avoid being stigmatised by society for getting pregnant out of wedlock.

Emboldened by its profitable nature, baby-factory operators overtime began recruiting and forcibly camping pregnant girls in their facilities. Thus, the element of abduction and illicit confinement was introduced into the business. Sometimes, the girls who were not pregnant upon their arrival at the baby factory were forcibly held for extended periods and repeatedly impregnated by young men recruited by the operators (Huntley, 2013). Some others are lured into such factories by the operators or their agents usually with false promises of jobs or safe abortions. They hold the girls until they give birth to babies that are subsequently sold to third parties. According to Nwachukwu (2012, p. 8), 'the natural mothers of the babies are forced to sign papers to renounce their rights to the babies'.

Some others were compelled to swear an oath never to seek custody in future after receiving monetary compensation. The mothers of the babies are usually teenage girls who are ignorant, impoverished and very poorly educated (L. Nwaiwu, personal communication, December 23, 2014). This underscores the socio-economic conditions that make girls vulnerable to be lured into the baby-factory business. Furthermore, the relatives of these young vulnerable girls are sometimes unaware of their whereabouts during their period of confinement. Thus, illicit confinement, deceit and forced impregnation which are some of the features of this business underscore the element of kidnapping as an important strategy in the complex operation. Several such factories have been uncovered by security and law enforcement officials in Nigeria. Data in Table 10.1 highlight some recent cases of baby factory discovered in Nigeria.

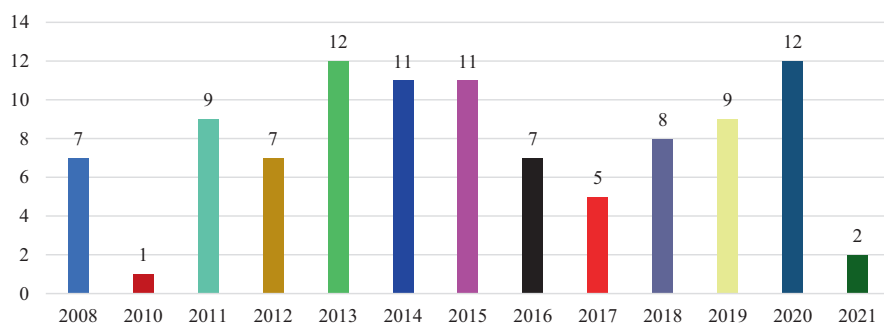
Familiarity with literature and media reports on the phenomenon of baby factory reveal that the business is more rampant in the southern part of Nigeria, but is gradually permeating into the northern parts of the country as well. Data compiled by authors from media reports on baby factories raided by security and law enforcement officials indicate that at least 110 of such outfits were uncovered in Nigeria between May 2008 and March 2021, as shown in Fig. 10.1. The highest number of baby-factory discovery was in years 2013 and 2020 with 12 incidents. This is followed by years 2014 and 2015 with 11 incidents each. Some 200 babies and 753 girls were reportedly recovered or rescued during the period under review.

Further breakdown of the data shows that most of the discoveries were in the southern part of Nigeria. The South East zone with 50 cases accounted for 45.5% of

Table 10.1 Some alleged baby factories recently uncovered in Nigeria

Date uncovered	City/state	Name/description of baby factory	Number of victims rescued
16 March 2021	Nnewi, Anambra state	An unnamed brothel used for baby factory located at Otolo, Nnewi	4 pregnant girls between the ages 18 and 21
27 January 2021	Oba, Anambra state	A house belonging to one Melvina Uju Uba, located opposite to Nnamdi Azikiwe orthopaedic teaching hospital Oba	10 girls and women, five of which were heavily pregnant
25 February 2020	Port Harcourt, Rivers state	Facility located at Woji area of Port Harcourt	4 pregnant teenagers and 24 babies
19 January 2020	Kano, Kano state	Du merci orphanage (a subsidiary of Du merci children development ministry) located at 15 Inibi avenue, opposite to old Assumpta Clinic, Nomansland	27 babies and a number of pregnant girls
22 November 2019	Umunkpeyi, Abia state	Nma charity home and rehabilitation Centre located at Umunkpeyi in Isiala Ngwa south LGA, Abia state	14 young girls and 4 babies
2 October 2019	Isolo, Lagos state	Facility located at Isolo area near Cele bus stop, Oshodi-Apapa expressway	20 pregnant young girls and women

Source: Authors' compilation

**Fig. 10.1** Baby factories discovered in Nigeria, May 2008–March 2021. Source: Authors' computation from dataset

the discovered baby factories in Nigeria, while the South South zone with 28 cases accounted for 25.5%, the South West zone with 17 cases accounted for 15.5% within the period under review (see Fig. 10.2). The epicentres of baby factory include Abia (22), Anambra (12), Rivers (12), Delta (9), Enugu (8), Lagos (8), Imo (6) Akwa Ibom (5) and Ogun (4). Baby factories have also been discovered in the northern part of the country, especially in the North Central geopolitical zone. The compilation by the authors may not be exhaustive, but clearly underscore the speed and scale with which the gravity of the threat has evolved.

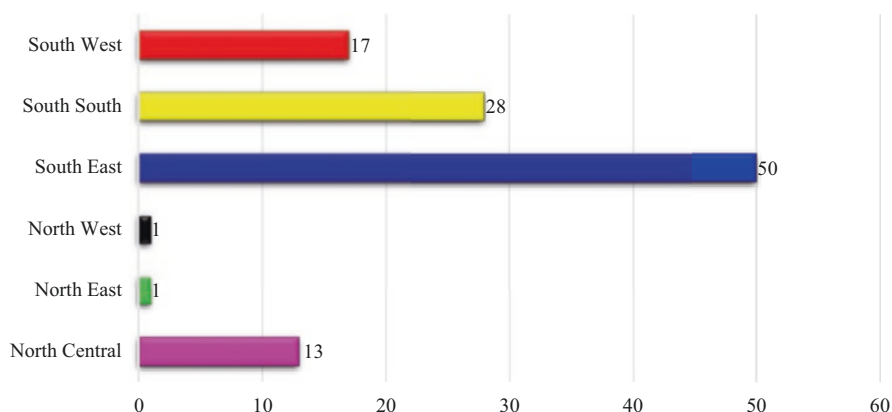


Fig. 10.2 Discovered baby factories by geopolitical zones in Nigeria, May 2008–March 2021. Source: Authors' compilation from media reports

The baby-factory business has flourished because of the vested interests of very powerful individuals who benefit hugely in financial terms from the organised criminal enterprise, reinforced by sustained patronage by a diverse clientele. The prices of the babies differ according to their sex. As in May 2020, male babies are reportedly sold for between 700,000 naira (about \$2000) and one million naira (about \$2700) while female babies are sold for between 500,000 naira (about \$1350) and 700,000 naira (Obaji, 2020). Boys are often preferred because of the belief that it gives the woman legitimacy and stronghold on her marriage, in addition to property inheritance rights enjoyed mostly by the male child in some cultural settings in Nigeria.

The foregoing analysis reveals that baby factories involved diverse actors with different motives, use of clandestine tactics like deception or coercion on victim, illicit confinement for sexual exploitation, and commoditisation of babies. The prevalence of baby factories in Nigeria has attracted wide ranging condemnation and countermeasures from both national and international organisations. Some of these organisations such as the NAPTIP, UNICEF, and UNODC have criticised the farming and trading on babies as wicked, barbaric, inhuman and generally unlawful. The baby-factory operation has continued despite the efforts of security forces to stem the trade. This has raised concern over what underpins the resilience and survival of this form of organised crime.

Understanding the Political Economy of Kidnapping for Baby Factory

A key to understanding the resilience of baby-factory operation in Nigeria is to probe its underlying political economy. It is pertinent to focus on the interaction of political and economic interests within the baby-factory context, especially the

Table 10.2 Major actors and their roles in kidnapping for baby factories in Nigeria

S/N	Actor	Nationality	Role and activities
1	Operators	Mostly Nigerians	Own and run facilities that are the factory for producing babies for sale
2	Medical directors/nurses/mid-wives	Mainly Nigerians	They monitor and care for the pregnant young women until after delivery
3	Unmarried pregnant women (mainly teenagers)	Mostly Nigerians	They are used as baby producers and compensated after delivery while their babies are sold
4	Able-bodied men	Mainly Nigerians	They are contracted to impregnate girls who were either kidnapped or lured into the factory over promises of job or huge financial compensation
5	Corrupt security agents	Nigerians	They are complicit with the syndicate and offer tipoff over possible raid of the baby factory by security, law enforcement or regulator agents thereby frustrating arrests.
6	Scouts	Mainly Nigerians	They identify vulnerable girls and young women in towns and rural areas, deceiving them with promise of jobs in the cities.
7	Couriers	Mainly Nigerians	They transport and deliver the baby to the buyer, within or across states borders.
8	Corrupt lawyers	Mainly Nigerians	They pose as legal practitioners and provide fake legal documents with which the babies are sold.
9	Clients/buyers	Mainly Nigerians	They buy the babies for end use either for adoption or in furtherance of other criminal activities.
10	Guards	Nigerians	Provides security in the facility to prevent escape or free movement of detained women or girls

Source: Authors' compilation

nature and character of distribution of power and influence among the different individuals for a clearer understanding of who gains and who loses in the process. Although several actors take part in this criminal enterprise (see Table 10.2), the operation of baby factories is a well-organised crime that survives on three major components: owners, producers and buyers.

The complex can be conceived from a Borromean rings' prism, consisting of three circles interlocking each other in ways that represent three critical broad actors and the relation among them in the operative environment—orphans, maternity home and herbal clinics. From a policy and programmatic point of view, interventions that successfully cut or break one ring have the potential to neutralise the lucrative structure. As shown in Fig. 10.3, the owners are those who operate the factories and employ the services of other relevant actors (health practitioners, guards, courier, impregnators, and lawyers) to ensure the survival of the business. The producers are the captive victims (girls with unwanted pregnancy, forcefully impregnated girls and trafficked or kidnapped girls) held to deliver babies. The buyers consist of diverse clientele such as traffickers, ritualists and childless couple. They are consumers of the end product of baby factory.

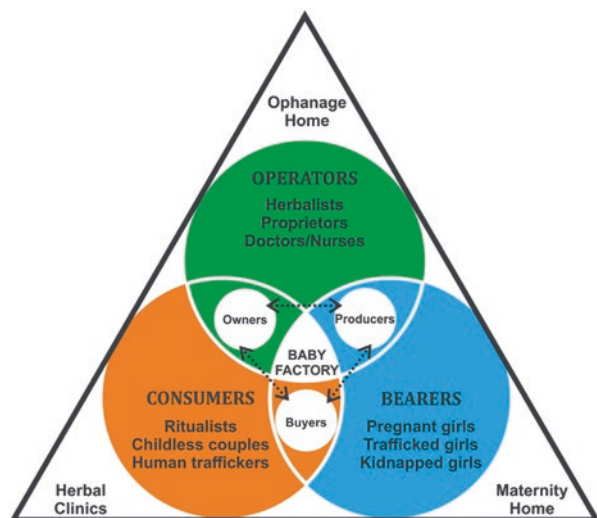


Fig. 10.3 The Baby-factory operation complex. Source: Authors' elaboration from insight gleaned from fieldwork and literature

The operators who are usually powerful individuals with access to those in authority often target the vulnerable population (young girls and women) who are largely poor, uneducated or disadvantaged in the distribution of power and wealth in the society. In pursuit of crude and primitive wealth accumulation by these powerful and well-connected individuals, vulnerable girls or women are deceitfully or forcefully recruited into the criminal enterprise as baby producers. Seen in this way, the baby bearers are saddled with the responsibility of producing babies while the proprietors provide care and pay for baby producers. Afterwards, the products (babies) are sold to interested buyers (consumers).

The element of kidnapping in the operation of baby factory is very well evident in the modus operandi of syndicates involved in such illicit business. Detention of people against their will or restriction of movement is a hallmark of baby-factory operations, underpinning its motive of exploiting the victims for primitive accumulation of wealth. Baby factory is a notorious human trafficking enterprise which provides steady flow of income to the rogue operators. Thus, the following pertinent deductions could be made of the appropriation of kidnapping for baby-factory operations in Nigeria:

- **Nature:** It is a well-organised and coordinated criminal enterprise, involving different actors with diverse motives or interests.
- **Motives:** The central motive is primitive accumulation through commoditisation of babies. The accumulation process is underpinned by the interplay of interests: the operators acquire wealth; the producers earn pittance and the clients receive babies.

- **Method:** Exploitation is the principal instrument in the realisation of the motives of powerful actors. The immediate victims are mostly teenage girls who are exploited through force or fraud but the ultimate victims are the helpless babies.
- **Operation:** It is largely concealed like most other organised crimes, as operators make concerted efforts at keeping their activities or outfits under the radar of security and law enforcement authorities.
- **Resilience:** The survival or persistence of such criminal networks is partly a function of the complicity, connivance or complacency of state officials. Typically, organised crime emerges out of the power vacuum that is created by the absence or complacency of state enforcement (Skaperdas, 2001).

Given that most of the young mothers are poor, uneducated and marginalised, they may not appreciate the consequences of losing their babies to unknown people who may eventually subject the babies to inhuman treatments or use them for rituals. As noted by Agunloye (2019, p. 4), the ‘baby producers for the factories are recruited by brokers who target poor, uneducated, rural young women who subsequently are disciplined into submission, accepting their roles as “perfect mothers” for national and international clients’. Onuoha (2014, p. 409) had earlier warned that ‘the sale of babies is a booming trade with international dimensions, which encompasses the locations from which the babies are sourced to the countries where the end-users receive them’. The latest indication of the international dimension of the trade emerged in April 2021 when the NAPTIP arrested a Nigerian-American woman for allegedly trafficking twins obtained from a baby factory—Nwamaka Herbal Centre—in Southeast Nigeria. She was arrested during an attempt to get necessary immigration documents for the twins (Shuaibu, 2021). The prevailing situation has brought to light some factors associated with kidnapping for baby factory in Nigeria. These are discussed subsequently.

Factors Behind the Upsurge in Kidnapping for Baby Factories

A multitude of factors can explain the prevalence of baby factory and trafficking in Nigeria. These include high poverty rate, social stigmatisation, and premium on child-bearing, moral decadence and weak state institutions.

Harsh socio-economic situation evident in high rate of poverty in the country contributes to the menace of baby factory. Nigeria is Africa’s most populous country and largest economy. Still, it is also a nation that houses the highest number of people living under extreme poverty conditions compared to anywhere else in the world. Nigeria has the largest extreme poverty population in the world as of June 2018 (Kharas et al., 2018), with over 87 million or nearly 50% of its estimated 180 million population living below the poverty line (Punch, 2018). Poverty is particularly acute in rural areas and among female-headed households, making affected women and girls susceptible to exploitation by those behind baby-factory operations.

Owing to widespread poverty, most parents find it difficult to feed their family daily and, as a result, they lose control of their children. Peer pressure eventually leads the children into survival strategies such as hawking in the street and motor parks, working at restaurants or serving as house maids. These environments often expose some teenage girls to abuse and sexual exploitation that results in unwanted pregnancies. For instance, some of the pregnant teenage girls rescued from a baby factory in Isiala Ngwa, Abia State, on 14 July 2014, blamed it on poverty and lack of parental care (Uka, 2014).

Social factors such as stigmatisation of young girls with unwanted pregnancies, especially among the Igbos of the South East and Yorubas of the South West zones, indirectly encourage the existence of baby factories. The stigmatisation forces some young girls to slip into baby factories to deliver their babies. The operation of baby factory offers at least two unfortunate incentives for the girl with unwanted pregnancy. First, the secretive nature of baby-factory operation provides an ideal space for the girls to escape being noticed by their parents or the community that they are pregnant. Second, the opportunity to even make money out of an unwanted pregnancy becomes an attraction to deliver the baby to such merchants.

A related factor that drives the boom in baby-factory business is the premium placed on having biological children in Nigeria, which compels some childless couples to indulge in sham adoptions out of desperation. Nigerian and indeed African culture place premium on child-bearing. To avoid attendant social pressure from family members, many childless couple resort to child-buying in order to save their marriage from collapse or avert divorce. In 2011, for instance, 'a childless Yoruba lady, who was married for 5 years and facing family discomforts, was lured by her lady friend into buying a baby from a "factory" in Aba, Abia State. The lady went to Aba, met the owners of the baby market and was asked to pay ₦2 million for a male child' (Madike, 2013).

Childlessness among couples has been a key factor in the collapse of marriages or divorce in recent times in Nigeria. In September 2013, for example, an Ilorin Area Court dissolved the six-year-old marriage between one Aminat Toheeb and her husband, Ismaila, over childlessness in the union (Punch, 2013). Investigations by the police revealed that couples or women who having been married for long without a child or without a male child mainly patronise baby factories to purchase babies (I.S. Orok, personal communication, August 6, 2014). Other desperate women go into sham adoption of babies from these baby factories to prevent their husbands from marrying second wife (polygamy) as well as to avoid societal stigma (Onuoha, 2015).

Decay in moral and social values manifest in brazen quest for easy money equally fuel baby factory. Babies who are not sold are usually forced into child labour, trafficked into prostitution or used for ritual purposes (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2018). Greed and desperation for riches have led many people into ritual killings, including using babies for sacrifices. As a senior police officer informed the first author: 'there is growing concern that not all the babies procured from such outfits are adopted by childless couples. Some end up as victims of ritual sacrifice' (A. Ibrahim, personal communication, December 24, 2014).

The inability of government agencies to effectively monitor the activities of orphanages and maternity homes, among others, allows for baby farming and baby sales under a cloak of legality. In addition, weak law enforcement owing to interference by, or complicity of, state actors has for a long time meant that apprehending traffickers is unlikely not to mention successfully prosecuting them (G. Omeh, personal communication, August 6, 2014). Those who operate baby factories are usually well connected and rely on corruption to perpetuate and protect their illicit business. According to Pukka (2012), those who operate the baby factories have the security agencies and some government officials on their payroll. This view was corroborated by another commentator who argued that the practice of baby-factory business had long existed 'due to the conniving role of some members of the society, especially those that patronise them and the complicity of some law enforcement agents compromised with money' (Asoluka, 2015, p. 136). To be sure, without such corruption and complicity of state officials it will be difficult for baby-factory business and human trafficking to thrive.

Effects of Kidnapping for Baby-Factory Operations in Nigeria

There are some effects of the operation of baby factory for contemporary Nigerian society. These include compromised health condition, human rights violation, underdevelopment of human capital and undermining of national image.

An under-researched but notable effect of baby-factory operation is the potential exposure of victims to infectious and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The operation of baby factory heightens the risk of spread of infectious diseases in Nigeria. One of such infectious diseases is HIV/AIDS which is the most dreaded because of its impact on national security. As of March 2019, UNAIDS and the National Agency for the Control of AIDS estimate that there are 1.9 million people living with HIV in Nigeria (UNAID, 2019). While Nigeria's national HIV prevalence is 1.4% among adults aged 15–49 years, women aged 15–49 years are more than twice as likely to be living with HIV than men (1.9% versus 0.9%.) The difference in HIV prevalence between women and men is greatest among younger adults, with young women aged 20–24 years more than three times as likely to be living with HIV as young men in the same age group.

Girls and women forced or recruited into baby-factory operation business are chiefly at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and other STDs because of unprotected sex. For example, about 17 young girls rescued from a baby factory in Imo State in 2013 told the Police that they were all impregnated by a 23-year-old man (Nkwopara, 2013). Unprotected sex in these outfits increases the risk of multiple transmission of infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS from the male impregnators to the girls and vice versa. According to Nwaiwu (personal communication, December 23, 2014), '3 out of the 23 girls rescued from baby factory in Imo State between 2009 and 2012 had HIV'. To be sure, HIV/AIDS undermines the health of the victims, in addition to the risk of mother-to-child transmission that perpetuates the epidemic. In 2018, it was

estimated that Nigeria has more HIV-infected babies than anywhere in the world (Cohen, 2018). By contributing to the spread of infectious diseases that undermine the health of a population, baby-factory business impacts negatively on national security in Nigeria.

In addition, kidnapping for baby factory in Nigeria violates the fundamental human rights of the victims to life and liberty. As noted by Patel (2015), 'the trading and exploitation of human being is the most despicable violation of human rights by traffickers'. Section 30 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (As Amended) provides that every Nigerian has the rights to personal liberty. However, the operation of baby factory leads to the violation of the rights of some of the victims, especially those teenage girls who are held against their will. Some of the victims of baby factory were made to work as prostitutes until they fell pregnant. After a raid on a baby factory in Njaba, Imo State, in May 2013 the then Imo State Commissioner of Police lamented that:

Children and teenagers forced into pregnancy were kept in captivity. They were rendered completely incommunicado. Their telephone handsets and other means of communication were taken away from them. They were kept in unventilated rooms, subjected to all manner of forced labour and perpetual servitude (cited in Vanguard 2014, p. 35).

Such inhuman treatment is a direct infringement on the human rights of the victims. It undermines their rights to grow up in the protected environment of the family, and freedom from forced labour and sexual abuse. Baby-factory operators deprive victims their rights to personal liberty, thereby impacting negatively on the victim's development and by extension the development of human capital in the society.

According to a public affairs analyst, 'operators of baby-factory business deprive the teenage girls of the opportunity of going to school to receive proper education or training that is expected to transform them into becoming part of the available skilled human capital in Nigeria' (C. Asoluka, personal communication, December 29, 2014). The resultant effect is that human capital is being underdeveloped. Conscious development of human capital contributes to economic prosperity as well as national security of a state. Human capital development relates to the education and training of individual members of society to generate the needed skills, knowledge, attitude and ability to exploit the resources of the nation for positive development (Awopegba, 2001). Young girls who were forced to get pregnant and deliver in baby factory are bound to be emotionally traumatised all through their lives. An officer in charge of anti-human trafficking unit in Abia State Police Command posited that 'in an attempt to overcome the psychological trauma associated with being forced to have pregnancy in a baby factory, some of the girls resort to taking dangerous psychotropic substances like marijuana and other depressants' (A.A. Audu, personal communication, December 23, 2014). This in turn has other long-term negative implications for Nigeria, such as increase in drug addiction and associated criminal behaviours.

Furthermore, the prevalence of kidnapping and baby factory remains huge source of embarrassment for Nigeria. In an era of globalisation, a country's image is an important asset in pursuit of her interests in the international arena. As noted by

Anholt (2007) the reputation of a country has a direct and measurable impact on just about every aspect of its engagement with other countries and plays a critical role in its economic, social, political and cultural development. As he persuasively puts it:

all responsible governments, on behalf of their people, their institutions and their companies, need to discover the world's perception of their country is, and to develop a strategy for managing it. It is a key part of their job to try to build a reputation that is fair, true, powerful, attractive, genuinely useful to their economic, political and social aims (Anholt, 2007, p. 2).

Thus, positive national image is a component of soft power tool that a country can leverage to pursue her national interests. Operation of baby factory not only undermines such soft power potential but add to the catalogue of negative situations that slur Nigeria's image and stature. For instance, Denmark in May 2014 suspended inter-country adoptions from Nigeria following a publication that the Lagos police discovered a suspected baby factory (AFP, 2014).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Kidnapping has grown in scale and frequency in Nigeria. It feeds into other forms of organised crimes such as baby factory much as it benefits from them. This chapter demonstrates that security agents have busted a number of child trafficking syndicate in Nigeria who operate factories where women are kidnapped, impregnated and their babies sold. Several factors are implicated in the growth of this criminal enterprise but the political economy of vested interest underpins its resilience and survival despite measures by authorities to dismantle the trade.

The Nigerian government has adopted measures such as the amendment of the NAPTIP act to cover child trafficking, the raiding of outfits used for baby factory, the prosecution of some suspects involved in the crime, and awareness creation through broadcast media. The threat of baby factory has persisted despite the measures adopted by government. Thus, effort to curb baby-factory operation in Nigeria requires a whole-of-society approach to be effective. To this end, the following strategic recommendations are proffered.

There is the need for the implementation of a robust and sustainable poverty reduction programmes that are gender sensitive. There is no doubt that the high incidence of poverty in Nigeria is a key factor underlying girls' and women's vulnerability to recruitment into baby factory. Hence, the implementation of economic policies and poverty reduction initiatives like the provision of microcredit schemes and skill acquisition training targeted at reducing the level of women's poverty will go a long way in empowering girls and women to gain sustainable livelihood as well as rationally avoid risky or exploitative situations.

Authorities should partner with credible civil society organisations and community-based structures to expand sensitisation and awareness campaigns targeting women and girls living in rural areas and in IDP camps to educate them on

their vulnerability to being trafficked or kidnapped for baby factory. In addition, the NAPTIP should scale up psycho-social support, trauma counselling and rehabilitation services to victims of baby factory, kidnapping and human trafficking.

The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development should partner with other stakeholders such as the Nigerian Union of Journalists to establish competitive grant scheme that will encourage investigating journalism to discreetly uncover the evolving modus operandi of criminal gangs involved in baby factory, trafficking and kidnapping.

Also, government establishments such as the Ministry of Information, National Orientation Agency and Directorate of State Services (DSS) should collaborate and leverage broadcast, print and social media to expand public enlightenment on the importance of security consciousness and situation awareness. This will enable citizen to easily detect and report unwholesome activities in their neighbourhood to authorities, such as syndicates clandestinely operating baby factory.

Furthermore, international development and donor agencies should partner with the Nigerian government to design and deliver bespoke training and refresher courses for security, law enforcement, immigration and judicial officials to acquire the requisite skillset for dealing with this form of organised crime such as kidnapping and baby factory.

There is equally the need for security and law enforcement officials to diligently prosecute suspected operators of the illicit business to serve as deterrence to others. In addition, mechanisms for ensuring motivation and reward for committed security officers are as important as the imposition of stringent sanctions against corrupt officials who are found complicity in kidnapping, child trafficking and baby factory.

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Chapter 11

Human Trafficking as Kidnapping by Other Means



Opeyemi Idowu Aluko

Abstract Human trafficking and kidnapping have aged connection in Nigeria and many other parts of the world. In some cases, they have become indistinguishable, as both feature forceful seizing and holding of a person against his will. In contemporary Nigeria, human trafficking has emerged as kidnapping by other means, as many are forced or deceived into slavery. The primary reason that makes trafficking and trade in human lucrative in and beyond the country ranges from social to political and economic incentives. The illicit practices have flourished with the trend of poverty, illiteracy, demand for cheap labour, demand for commercial sex, shortage of attention for the rights of the vulnerable groups of people, social factors and cultural practices, conflict and natural disaster, profit generated from this and associated businesses, shortage of safe migration options and availability of victims. This chapter therefore interrogates the nexus between human trafficking and kidnapping in Nigeria, with attention for the causes, manifestation and consequences.

Introduction

Nigeria is one of the major economic hubs in Africa. It occupies an important position in the political economic and social dynamics of the continent. The economic potentials of Nigeria can cater for about seventy per cent (70%) of countries in Africa. The human capital of Nigeria makes it the largest market in Africa and the largest black nation in the world. Indeed, Nigeria is a destination for trade and investment for many countries around the world. In West Africa, Nigeria's role is central and cardinal in maintaining leadership and political economy stability (Aluko, 2017a; Aluko and Ogunnubi, 2018). The political economy of the region revolves around Nigeria. Nevertheless, the country ranks among the 20 poorest

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nations in the world. With an annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita estimated at \$300, 65% of the country's population lives below the poverty line (World Bank, 2021; Global Finance, 2021). Nigeria as a country has her own fair share in all human economic and political endeavours. These include the legitimate trade and the illegitimate trade. Some of these illegitimate trades include neo-colonialism, kidnapping and human trafficking which are modern slaveries (Scarpa, 2008; Landman and Silverman, 2019).

Nigeria is a product of colonialism, with history of slavery between the late fifteenth century and mid-nineteenth century, when many Africans were shipped to Europe and Americas in what formally became the transatlantic slave trade. The intercontinental slave trade from Africa by Europeans to Americas became a booming business due to the insatiable need for human capital in the rich mineral deposits and plantations waiting to be exploited at the other side of the Atlantic, where the native Indians could not cope with. Consequently, the demand for slaves increased dramatically and the attention shifted to Africa for massive influx or trafficking of able-bodied Africans into the new world as slaves (Klein, 2010; Nunn and Wantchekon, 2011; Klein, 2021).

This trend in human trafficking for forced labour continued until 1808 when the horrible trade was formally abolished (Akor, 2011). Although transatlantic slave trade ended in the eighteenth century, a modern form of slavery, which involves trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation and commercial labour in Europe and America from the developing countries, particularly Africa (Nigeria) is on the upward swing in recent years. Millions of adults and children are victims of human trafficking for sexual slavery, forced labour and other forms of exploitation worldwide (Global Slavery Index, 2018). Although the costs of human capital expended on the trade are probably impossible to quantify, it was conservatively estimated recently that the cost of underpayment of wages and recruitment of trafficked persons globally is over \$20 billion per year (Farrell and de Vries, 2020; Van Buren III et al., 2021).

The primary reason that makes the trafficking and trade in human lucrative across the world ranges from social to political and economic incentives. These involve poverty, social exclusion, questionable justice system and poor adherence to rule of law in human society. This chapter interrogates the nexus between human trafficking and kidnapping in Nigeria. One of the ways that this will be done is by clarification of the two concepts and discussion of the dynamics of the economics, political and socio-cultural factors propelling the illicit practices. Furthermore, some kidnapping incidents, actors and their networks in Nigeria are discussed and probable solutions are proffered.

Human Trafficking and Kidnapping: A Conceptual Clarification

Human trafficking or trafficking in person has many connotations and definitions. The United Nations (2009) in the Trafficking in Persons Protocol defines it as a crime that involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power or a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (Article three, subparagraph A).

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2009) defines three basic elements of trafficking: the process, the means and the purpose. The process involves recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring and receipt of persons. The means include threat, force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power, abuse of vulnerability, giving and receiving payments. The purpose for general exploitation includes prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour and services, slavery and similar practices, involuntary servitude and removal of organs. In essence, human trafficking is a form of urban violence that involves the act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring or receiving of persons by the means of threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or giving payments or benefits to a person in control of the victim for the purpose of exploitation, which includes exploiting humans for prostitution, sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery or similar practices and the removal of human organs (UNODC, 2009; Aluko, 2018).

Besides human trafficking, which is a long-time activity in human history, kidnapping is another form of forceful taking of a person in an unlawful manner. The root words included in this concept is kid and nap. A kid is a little child that is expected to be under the custody of a parent or caregiver, while nap implies the act of snatching away of a person forcefully or otherwise without a lawful consent. In recent times, kidnapping of humans has become another form of human transportation from one part of the country to the other for various motives, especially the financial ones. Kidnapping means unlawfully detaining of a person or persons against their will (including through the use of force; threat; fraud or enticement) for the purpose of demanding for their liberation an illicit gain or any other economic gain or other material benefit; or in order to oblige someone to do or not to do something (Aluko 2018; Okafor and Ede, 2021). Kidnapping excludes disputes over child custody especially in America where child rights and custody rights exists (Kreston, 2001; Glenn, 2019).

Other perspective on kidnapping includes the opinion that whenever a victim is kidnapped, it suggests that he or she was abducted in a criminal manner (Greenawalt, 1989; Aluko 2016). It is the unlawful removal of someone and confining him or her in isolation and a situation of force imprisonment, to restrain the victim unlawfully, usually accomplished by threat of coercion to stay in captivity. Inyang and Abraham (2013) opined that it is a common law offence which involves forcible seizure and

taking human victims away to unknown location. In relation to criminal law, Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene (2019) posited that kidnapping is the taking away or transportation of a person against that person's will, usually to hold the person in false imprisonment, a confinement without legal authority.

Kidnapping as perceived by Oyewole and Onuoha (2021) is a kind of abduction, and a form of hostage situation that involves forceful movement or relocation of the victim from the site of attack, capture, taking or seizure to a location considered to be safe for the perpetrator. They further posited that kidnapping by abduction is an unconventional political and economic practice, which is often associated with armed non-state groups, including the likes of organized bandits, pirates, terrorists, insurgents, militias, privateers, warlords, syndicates, ritualists, human traffickers or slave traders and baby factories.

Kidnapping and Human Trafficking Nexus in Nigeria

There are several connections between human trafficking and kidnapping across the world and in Nigeria most especially. The following are the major nexus that will be discussed; human trafficking and kidnapping is product of bad governance, both are product of terrorism, they both affect women, men and children and involve a range of exploitative practices, the two do not require the crossing of an international border, human trafficking and kidnapping does not always require movement and it is not possible to 'consent' to human trafficking and kidnapping. These major nexuses will be succinctly discussed.

Human trafficking and kidnapping in Nigeria is a product of bad governance: Bad governance is the type of governance that does not take to positive cognisance the plight of the citizens. The welfare of the citizen is poorly handled, the health sector, housing and other basic human needs are usually neglected by the government. These governance neglect do lead to all forms of social melees that cumulate into human trafficking, kidnapping and other illicit strategies of eking a living.

Also, human trafficking and kidnapping are product of terrorism: terrorism such as Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen crises had left several people homeless, internally displaced and without hope of survival. The internally displaced people (IDP) in various IDP camps across Nigeria as a result of terrorism and natural disasters are usually the soft target and cheap victims for human traffickers and kidnappers.

Human trafficking and kidnapping in Nigeria affects women, men and children and involves a range of exploitative practices: Trafficking was traditionally associated with the movement of women and girls into sexual exploitation while kidnapping is for slavery or rituals. Men and women, boys and girls can all be trafficked or kidnapped. Therefore, both phenomena are related because the set of people affected as victim by both illicit practices are the same in all societies (Aluko, 2020c).

Human trafficking and kidnapping does not require the crossing of an international border: Human trafficking and kidnapping does not necessarily mean the victims are transported out of the country across international borders. However,

victims can be moved from one location of the country to the other. Usually the movement takes a trend from the rural area to the urban area. Some victims may be kidnapped within the urban area and taken to the rural areas without crossing international borders. This is in tandem with the Global Slavery Index (2018) report that 2% of those who are trafficked are trafficked outside the country while the rest are both interstate and intrastate kidnapping and human trafficking.

It is not possible to 'consent' to human trafficking and kidnapping; International human rights law has always recognized the intrinsic inalienability of personal consent to human trafficking and kidnapping. Victims of human trafficking in Nigeria are usually put under delusion about the realities of their destinations and the true picture of the work offer available to them. Therefore, most are cajoled into agreement while some are forced into the illicit trade. On the other hand, the victims of kidnapping in Nigeria are mostly forced into obedience without any chance to either consent or dissent. This nexus implies that both illicit practices put the victim under delusion and poor or no mental stability to make informed choices.

Actors and Networks of Human Trafficking in Nigeria

Human trafficking exists in Nigeria and indeed, across the world today. It affects women, girls, boys, children and youths in general. Nigeria is a country of origin, transit and destination for victims of human trafficking for labour exploitation or forced labour. As a country of origin, it implies that it is a place where victims are shopped or sourced and assembled. A transit country implies a route for the illicit traders in transporting their victims to various destinations. As a destination country for human trafficking, it implies that traffickers also send in victims to their numerous clients. It is pertinent to say that men, women and children from Nigeria are kidnapped or cajoled and trafficked to Western Europe, the Middle East, and West, South and Central African countries. Victims from neighbouring countries of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali and Niger are also exploited in Nigeria in a wide range of industries, including domestic work, mining, stone quarrying, manufacturing, and work in farms and plantations or ritual making (US Department of State, 2017).

A prominent and pervasive form of human trafficking that evades most security checks in Nigeria is the internal trafficking from rural areas to urban centres. This route includes among others the Lagos, Ibadan, Port Harcourt, Aba, Abuja, Kano, Kaduna, Kogi, Benin, Kwara and Abuja routes. This in particular takes place among women and children trafficked for domestic labour, agricultural work, manufacturing, street begging and sexual exploitation. Between 2012 and 2014, UNODC (2016) reported that 58% of detected victims of human trafficking were children, while 42% were adults.

Children are often moved within Nigeria, allegedly for the purposes of education but frequently with the result that children are placed in exploitative labour, such as domestic servitude while others are moved outside the country with the false notion

and promise of good job and cheap money but ends up as sex slaves and other hard labour in restaurants where the patron will receive the wages instead of the victim (International Labour Organization, 2016). Children from other West African countries are also moved through Nigeria to work in forced labour in Cameroon and Gabon, or are subjected to forced labour in Nigeria, including in granite and gold mines (US Department of State, 2017).

Kidnapped Nigerians are trafficked within and outside the country, across Africa, Europe and other continents. This implies that there are some actors and networks of flows that make the trade a continuum. These include the presences of vulnerable people who due to social, political or economic reasons become victim of circumstances, the presence of available traffickers who are ready to trick their victims into the unknown expedition, the patrons who receive the victims into the foreign land and settle them into the illicit economic activities. The last link in the chain of kidnapping and human trafficking is the clients who patronize the patrons for supply of the victims to satisfy their needs in the foreign or other land. The Global Slavery Index (2018) reported that Nigeria ranks 32 out of 167 of the countries with the highest number of slaves. This implies about a total of 1,386,000 victims of kidnapping and human trafficking. These are mostly girls between the ages of 12 to 17. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) further analysed that 75% of those who are trafficked within Nigeria are trafficked across states, while 23% are trafficked within states (The Guardian, 2021). This made the network the third most common crime in Nigeria after drug trafficking and economic fraud.

Figure 11.1 shows the linkage and network between the various actors in the chain of human trafficking.

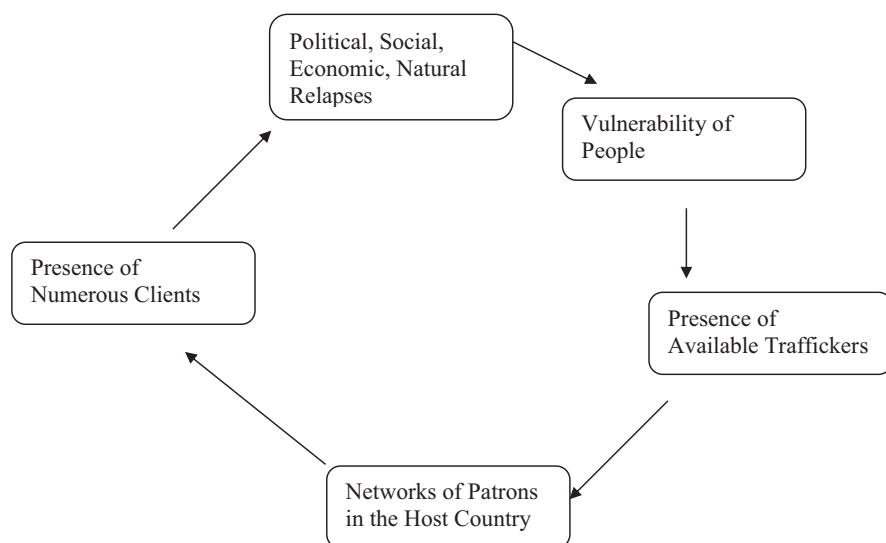


Fig. 11.1 Network of human trafficking. Source: designed by the author

From Fig. 11.1, whenever there are political crises, economic instability, social crises and/or natural disasters, so many people will be negatively affected. This makes them vulnerable to various socioeconomic and political mishaps. This mishap includes kidnapping for ransom, ritual or for human trafficking so as to make a living and alleviate poverty. Human trafficking will become impossible if there are no available traffickers who are willing to engage in the illicit expedition. Therefore, the presence of available traffickers is a major junction in the trade. If there are vulnerable people due to political, social, economic or natural relapses, but if no one is exploiting the victims or the victims are properly protected by the law and security agents, such trade or act will go into a natural extinction.

However, it is sufficing to say that the available traffickers have links with other individual who are placing huge demand for cheap labours in foreign countries or across states within the country. These people are the patrons facilitating the flow of money in the illicit act. They place prices on the lives of victims supplied by the traffickers while at the same time; they compel the victim to unfavourable conditions such as commercial sex among others to recuperate the monies back. The patrons link up with various clients who are interested in the cheap labours and in turn the patron pays the client for the supply of such human victim and not the victim for the services they rendered. These trend of human trafficking further cases relapses or sustain the initial relapse in the socio, political and economic environment of such country.

In 2015, the Nigerian government identified 943 victims of trafficking, including 429 victims of sex trafficking and 514 of labour trafficking (US Department of State, 2017). Relief Web (2018) and The Guardian (2020) revealed that about 21,000 Nigerian women and girls have been trafficked to Italy since 2015 with 80% being likely victims of human trafficking while 64% of girls trafficked to Italy are from Nigeria. The major reasons why such exploitation figure is high and on the increase in Nigeria include economic issues such as high unemployment, poor minimum wage, devaluation of the local currency among others. Other reasons include political unrest, election violence, ethnic violence, religious violence, terrorism acts of the Boko Haram Islamic sect, on the one hand, and the Fulani herdsmen crises against the farmers, on the other hand (Aluko, 2017b; Aremu and Aluko, 2017; Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021). Social reasons such as cultural practice of underage marriage, 'alimanghiri' practice in the Northern Nigeria (young boys are permitted to live on the street out of parental care in the claim of Islamic education). Other reasons are psychological such as euphoria or fantasia of travelling abroad for a better but uncertain wellbeing. All of these contribute to high rates of both internal and external migration, force labour, kidnapping and human trafficking.

Economic and Socio-Cultural Drivers of Kidnapping and Human Trafficking in Nigeria

There are several causes of human trafficking around the world. This section discusses ten causes of this illicit practice, including poverty, level of education, demand for cheap labour, demand for commercial sex, shortage of attention for the rights of the vulnerable groups of people, social factors and cultural practices, conflict and natural disaster, profit generated from this and associated businesses, shortage of safe migration options and availability of perpetrators.

- (i) *Poverty*: Poverty is one of the largest contributors to human trafficking. It drives people such as parents and other caregivers or unknown persons to become traffickers by kidnapping and selling children, family members or other general victims in the society into slavery. The Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics revealed in 2020 that 40% or 83 million Nigerians live in poverty. Using the World Bank's income poverty threshold of \$3.20 per day, Nigeria's poverty rate is 71%. This is a major reason for people seeking means to alleviate poverty and engaging in kidnapping for ransom or (money) rituals (Aluko, 2014; 2020a). Poor people are also easily targeted by traffickers, who entice them with cheap promises, money and other benefits. Poverty plays a huge role in other root causes of kidnapping and trafficking. It is driving people to migrate, making education and legitimate work less attractive and difficult to obtain. Poverty also makes recovery and safety of victims from war and disaster impossible (Aluko, 2020a).
- (ii) *Poor level or lack of education*: Education can determine the level of employment opportunities and decent work to earn a good and living wage. Illiteracy can increase knowledge gap about what is the right of individuals and the corresponding limitations. A person with no or little education will make him more vulnerable to become a kidnapper or a human trafficker or to become a victim of human trafficking. An educated person will be well informed to know the dictate of the law about human trafficking and kidnapping thus such person might not jeopardize his life or other members of the society by engaging in such activities. Nigeria is ranked 161st on the 2020 Global Youth Development Index which measures the status of young people in 181 countries around the world, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2020). The gross enrolment ratio in secondary education is 42% (2016). This is lower than both the average for its region (50%) and the average for its income group (70%). The adolescent girl out of school in the region is 33% (World Bank, 2020). This shows a drastic low level of educational development and value attached to the school and certification across the country.
- (iii) *Demand for cheap labour*: This is a major reason for slavery that warranted the transatlantic slave trade. This reason still persists till date. The economic principles of trade explain that for a market to be established, the forces of

supply and demand must be in existence. The demands for cheap labour in many informal sectors and illegal enterprises in various cities locally and abroad are factors aiding the sustenance of human trafficking, leading to opportunities for traffickers to exploit people. Traffickers make large profit by supplying victims as labour force gotten cheaply or freely from kidnapping and human trafficking to various enterprises demanding for cheap and hard-to-come-by labour in order to increase in productivities and financial gains.

- (iv) *Demand for commercial sex:* There is a high delusion on free foreign trips engagement as promised by traffickers of persons. The aftermath of such free foreign trips with the promises of a good job abroad is commercial sex (Litam and Lam, 2020). Most of the victims are the female gender who are less educated and at the same time seek for overseas jobs by free travelling schemes. Therefore, the commercialised sex saga is a lucrative market because the receiving nations have patrons that host the victims, there are clients that requests for the cheap services of the victims and the victims are compelled to degrade themselves and their human dignity for money. Victims are tasked with daily monetary targets to be delivered to the patron from the commercial sex work. Therefore, the traffickers, patrons and the clients' linkage are major actors that promote the demand for human trafficking for commercial sex.
- (v) *Inadequate human rights for vulnerable groups:* *Human rights advocates are the group of people that ensure that the right of all humans are well secured without any form of infringement from any external or internal forces* (Peroni and Timmer, 2013). In some countries, groups that are marginalized in society lack institutionalized human rights advocates which can help any potential victims of trafficking. Traffickers prey on the gap that there is fewer or no protection for the victim in terms of relevant law enforcement or no marginalized groups because they lack the knowledge of such rights and groups. Also, when countries lack fundamental laws regarding human rights, traffickers get away with marginalization of vulnerable groups.
- (vi) *Social factors and cultural practices:* In Nigeria, cultural practices and social factors are a major cause of human trafficking. In some places, bonded labour is seen as an acceptable way to pay off debt. Therefore, victims are meant to pay the debt of their parents to their captors until the wages are fully paid. In other places, selling children to traffickers is the norm, especially for poorer families in rural areas so that the child will bail the family out of poverty. There are also instances where forced labour are generalise seasonally such as during the agricultural harvest, all adults and children are expected to work in the farm until the crops are harvested. In such cultural and social factors disposition, participants or victims may not speak up about being trafficked or who their traffickers are.
- (vii) *Conflict and natural disaster:* Conflict and natural disaster can lead to economic instability and jeopardise human rights. This situation gives traffickers an advantage and makes people more vulnerable to human trafficking situations. In conflict zones and wars, some rebel or military groups will use child soldiers and keep sex slaves. Conflict and natural disaster can cause affected

people to become internally displacement or refugees (Salawu and Aluko, 2018). For instance, Boko Haram crisis has affected 14.8 million people, out of which about 2 million have become internally displaced persons (IDP) or refugees (Onuoha and Oyewole, 2018). This makes them more vulnerable to traffickers, especially if they are looking for work or paying smugglers to get security to a safe haven.

- (viii) *Trafficking generates is profitable*: One major reason why human trafficking is witnessing sustainability is due to the large profit that traffickers gain. This is an incentive for them to continue trafficking people in both forced labour and sex trafficking. The money comes from the cheap labour they sold their victims to and on the part of the clients; the victims are subjected to hard labour and excessive work so as to achieve maximum production of goods at cheap labour and sold at the product or service at a much higher cost (Marburger and Pickover, 2020; Aluko, 2020b). For those using sex trafficking, they make profits by forcing women to make certain amount each night, taking all of the profit and keeping them in the situation through drugs, violence and threats.
- (ix) *Inadequate safe migration options: Many youths desire to migrate out of their home country seeking for Eldorado*. Some travelled due to safety concerns or economic opportunities. Due to lack of proper travel and migration procedures, they are especially fall vulnerable to traffickers. For migrants looking for jobs in other countries, traffickers typically offer them job opportunities that seem legitimate, only to force them into a trafficking situation. For instance, many women from Nigeria, other Eastern European and African countries are offered restaurant jobs in Western Europe, only to be trapped in sex trafficking. In January 2021, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) revealed a rescued mission of 350 Nigerians trafficked to Libya, as well as arrested six traffickers (The Guardian, 2021).
- (x) *Availability of Traffickers*: The presence of human traffickers is a major factor that makes the illicit trade to remain flourishing. If there are vulnerable individuals, unhealthy cultural practices, profiteering agenda, lack of human rights, political instability, economic instability, natural disaster or conflict in the magnitude of war among others but no traffickers or people who choose to exploit people for their own gain, no individual will become a victim of kidnapping or human trafficking. While many of these factors may be major reasons why traffickers get into the business, the traffickers still make wilful or deliberate decisions to forcefully enslave their victims against their will. Trafficking ultimately exists because people are willing to exploit others into trafficking situations.

Through understanding the root causes and character of human trafficking, the consequences are in multiple phases. These include political, social and economic consequences. The political consequences include the suppression of the rule of law to become the weapon of the strong against the weak and vulnerable. It makes the political system weakened and vulnerable to the manipulation of a few rich and

powerful as against an egalitarian society. It reveals the porosity of the borders of such country and the inadequacies inherent in the security system. Some of the economic consequences include the human dignity and life is degraded to a mere commodity or substance to be exploited instead of what should be treasured. Human rights become eroded due to the economic profiteering motive. Dignity of labour is replaced with the quest to make illicit money by subjecting the victims to excessive labour or child labour. In such circumstances, the social consequences make a lee-way for the rich to become richer while the poor becomes poorer. The community becomes a polarized entity between the strong that subjugates and the weak that is subjugated.

State Response to Kidnapping and Human Trafficking in Nigeria

Kidnapping in Nigeria has evolved into a multifaceted criminal enterprise with political, ideological, financial, social and cultural dimensions. The origin of this phenomenon can be prominently traced to abductions by Niger Delta militants in the early 2000s. The militants would kidnap foreign oil workers and use them as bargaining chips to draw international attention to environmental degradation and underdevelopment in oil-producing communities. Over time, the practice became increasingly monetised. Militants went from kidnapping oil workers to kidnapping local politicians, their relatives or other high-net-worth individuals.

In terms of geographic prevalence, kidnapping for ransom and extortion by criminal groups, is widespread in the Niger Delta states—notably Delta, Edo and Abia. They are the epicentre of kidnapping in Nigeria. In the past three years, Kaduna has also become a kidnapping hotspot and red zones (Osumah and Aghedo, 2011; Oyewole, 2016a; 2016b). In April 2018, UNICEF reported that Boko Haram had abducted more than 1000 children since 2013, including 276 girls from Chibok in Borno state and 113 from Dapchi in Yobe state (Tade et al., 2020; Ayuba, 2020). The group is also believed to have abducted several hundred people over the past five years in attacks on villages in north-east Nigeria, and in neighbouring countries such as Niger and Cameroon.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) revealed that there are nearly 23,000 missing people in Nigeria, is its largest in Africa, out of a total of 44,000 missing on the continent. It is the ICRC's highest number registered in any country in the world (Red Cross, 2020). Between 2011 and 2020, Campbell (2020) noted that over \$18 million had been paid in ransom. The amount of ransom accelerated in the latter portion of that period, between January 2016 and March 2020, is about \$11 million (Red Cross, 2020).

In this light, Section 364 of Nigeria's Criminal Code provides a penalty for kidnapping, stating that: any person who unlawfully imprisons any person, and takes him out of Nigeria without his consent; or unlawfully imprisons any person within

Nigeria in such a manner as to prevent him from applying to court for his release or from discovering to any person the place where he is imprisoned, or in such a manner as to prevent any person entitled to have access to him from discovering the place where he is imprisoned; is guilty of a felony, and is liable to imprisonment for 10 years (Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990; Aluko, 2019).

However, the Nigerian government maintained substantive anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. In 2015, the government passed amendments to the 2003 Trafficking in Persons Law Enforcement and Administration Act, which increased the penalties for trafficking offenders. The Trafficking in Persons Law Enforcement and Administration Act (TIPLEAA), as amended in 2015, criminalized sex trafficking and labour trafficking and prescribed a minimum penalty of two years' imprisonment and a fine of 250,000 naira (\$690) for both sex and labour trafficking; the minimum penalty for sex trafficking increased to seven years' imprisonment and a fine of one million naira (\$2770) if the case involved a child victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and with regard to sex trafficking and other serious crimes such as rape or kidnapping. The level of enforcement of the law is important so as to find lasting solutions to the menace.

As part of the enforcements technicalities, NAPTIP conducted 507 trafficking investigations, completed at least 32 prosecutions, and secured 24 convictions in 2018, compared with 509 investigations, 56 prosecutions, and 30 convictions in 2015. All prosecutions occurred under the anti-trafficking law, and prison sentences upon conviction ranged from three months' to 14 years' imprisonment. Of the 24 convictions, 16 resulted in imprisonment without the option of paying a fine. However, despite a 2015 amendment that removed judges' ability to sentence traffickers to fines in lieu of prison time, Nigerian courts penalized traffickers with only fines (US Department of State, 2020). In 2020, NAPTIP received 943 cases for investigation, completed 210 investigations, prosecuted 64 suspects, and convicted 27 traffickers, compared with receiving 938 cases for investigation and completing 192 investigations, 64 prosecutions, and 43 convictions in 2019 (United States Department of State, 2018; US Department of State, 2020).

Conclusion

Human trafficking and kidnapping in Nigeria is one of the visible signs of breakdown in the adequate welfare system in the country. It is also a share in the global political economy of illicit trade and egocentric drive of human nature. Several people had fallen victim of the schemer of kidnapping and human trafficking. The total number of victims in Nigeria of both human trafficking and kidnapping per year is more than five thousand (5000). The net worth of the illicit trade per year is millions of dollars. Therefore, there are more prospects for the illicit trades to be sustained.

Several other socioeconomic and political factors are responsible for the perpetual sustenance of the illicit trade in Nigeria. A list of such includes poverty, gender

inequality, age discrimination, limited economic opportunity and limited educational opportunity, poor governance, lack of rule of law in the daily social and political governance, political conflicts, electoral conflict, ethnic violence, religious violence, war, social exclusion, social and cultural structures (power, hierarchy and social order), marginalization and discrimination based on ethnicity, race, disability, and religion intolerance, community's tradition of movement and other social practices that permit using of children as a means of exchange or debt payment. Other issues propelling human trafficking and kidnapping include climate change, natural disaster, individual drug abuse, alcohol addiction and mental health condition.

The government in Nigeria need to pay more attention to the factors that are promoting human trafficking and kidnapping in the country. The overall welfare of the people must be taken care of so as to prevent illicit trades and acts. Continuous education of the citizens and increase in state presence in terms of security and infrastructural development will reduce the menace. The laws of the land governing every human enterprise and interactions must first be obeyed by the leaders as examples to the entire citizens. This leadership by example living will propel strict compliance by the majority of the citizenry.

This will therefore reduce the free order of human trafficking and kidnapping streak in the country. Strict punishments should be meted out to offenders of the law prohibiting human trafficking and kidnapping because of its dehumanizing nature. The criminalization of ransom payment and intensifying in monitoring and surveillance capability of the security outfits in the country will reduce the trend of kidnapping and human trafficking in Nigeria. Other international laws prohibiting such illicit acts must be properly domesticated in the country's body of laws. Finally, the enforcement agency prohibiting human trafficking and kidnapping must be properly empowered with the entire needs such as professional staffs, prompt judicial prosecution of violators and vindication of the victims, better welfare of the staff and other intensifying in rendering social educational services to the country.

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Chapter 12

Gender Dimensions of Kidnapping in Nigeria



Tunde Agara

Abstract The narrative of this chapter is on the gender dimension of kidnapping in Nigeria with special focus on the Chibok and Dapchi abductions. The chapter pointed out that this was not a “new thing” in Nigeria as it had been the modus operandi of the Niger Delta militants even though theirs was mainly focused on expatriates working on the oil fields. However, the Boko Haram terrorist gang has adopted this and hence closed the dividing line between the activities of terrorism and criminal gangsterism. The chapter further investigates female involvement in kidnapping as either agents and/or victims. As agents, the chapter explores the use of women in terrorist activities especially as suicide bombers and helpers of male terrorists. As victims, the chapter explores the exploitation of women as sex slaves and forced marriages. Although our focus is on Nigeria, the chapter also took a panorama view of incidents of female kidnapping in other countries. Kidnapping seems to flourish particularly in fragile states and conflict-prone countries, as politically motivated militias, organised crime and the drugs mafia fill the vacuum left by government. We conclude on a note of caution that there is a great possibility that Boko Haram may be abducting girls and women to use as future recruits or suicide bombers.

Introduction

Kidnapping has acquired an unsavoury reputation as a global phenomenon and problem that affects nations irrespective of whether they belong to any of the three worlds (first, second or third worlds). As a criminal act, it has become globalised, spanning from the United States and Mexico to Africa, Asia and even beyond. The global spread of this act, which does not respect development index as such, has made nebulous and belied Singer and Wildavsky's (1993) division of the globe into

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two: “the zones of peace” to imply the industrialised world, and “the zones of turmoil” to imply the developing world. Kacowicz’s (1995) similar division of the globe into “the zones of peace” and “the zones of war” has also become unnecessary in the face of the global spread of this illegal act by both criminal and terrorist organisations.

The proliferation of incidents of kidnapping seems to have caused a convergence between activities of organised crime and terrorism as both now seem to be competing to prove whose exclusive preserve is this act or who is more proficient in kidnapping. The reality of globalisation and the growing economic interdependence it has engendered have not only encouraged and promoted the transformation of crime beyond borders, but it has also made it international and useful for terrorism such that the dividing line between these two is rapidly converging if not converged already. Both thrived on and are quick to exploit the opportunities presented by improved communication and information, technologies, increased blurring of national borders, greater mobility of people, goods and services across countries and the emergence of a globalised economy to move crime and terrorism further from their bases. As Violante (2000, p. x) has noted, “money, goods and people have circulated with a rapidity and facility which were once unthinkable” and organised crime and terrorism have been quick to follow the trail laid by this movement. As the world has witnessed, terrorist activities and the emergence of various cells or clones from the “mother lode” Al Qaeda are increasing their scope of actions and operations, range of capabilities and are undergoing profound change (Agara et al., 2017). The same can be said for organised crime (Godson and Olson 1995, p. 19).

For instance, in places such as the Balkans, Brazil, Italy, Cambodia and generally, the breakaway areas of the former Soviet Union and Latin America, organised crime and terrorist organisations share and operate within the same topography and hence the close proximity does enhance the possibility of membership overlapping (Shelley et al., 2005). In some cases, terrorist organisations build on, imitate and assume criminal behaviours, which are prevalent around their geographic area of operations. The result of this is some element of intimacy between the two groups, borrowing techniques from each other, but making it difficult to separate between them. This happens, particularly in places where governance and government presence is virtually nil, where there is ethnic separatism and a tradition of criminal activity such as failed states, regions prone to long protracted wars and conflicts. The proliferation of instances of kidnapping and hostage taking in Nigeria has it made plausible this convergence. Although Uzorma and Nwanegbo (2014) have attempted to localise kidnapping to the southern part of the country, the proliferation of this incidents in the North-East and North Central of the state, especially by the terrorist group of Boko Haram has belied this assertion.

The antecedent to the spate of kidnapping being experienced in Nigeria today has been traced to the activities of the Niger Delta militants. In particular, the various militant groups that have emerged as a result of the struggle and agitation for resource control and nationalism, the clamour for a better and bigger share of the oil revenue, and the claim of political closure, which has led to accusations of marginalisation and deprivations, have been seen as the major culprits (Townsend, 2008,

Turner, 2008, Essien and Ema, 2013, Agara, 2011, and Akpan, 2010). This grievance-induced act of kidnapping has since translated to greed-induced, with the kidnapping being used for profit-making and personal or group enrichment (Demola, 2011; Berdal and Malone, 2004). As a moneymaking venture undertaken by both organised crime and terrorists, kidnapping in Nigeria has now become proliferated; a daily occurrence, which has spread throughout the rest of the South-South states of Edo, Bayelsa, Rivers, Cross Rivers, Akwa Ibom and the South-East states of Abia, Imo, Ebonyi, Enugu and Anambra. The South-West has not been left out and in the North it has become the trademark of and made popular by the Boko Haram terrorist group.

Many reasons have been proffered for its beginning in the Niger Delta. For instance, Akpan (2010) related it to the consequence of total neglect of the Niger Delta by the multinational corporations (MNCs) and the failure of governance in the Fourth Republic. The persistent failure of the state to ensure equitable distribution, neglect and alienation on the part of the Niger Delta people also culminated into higher level of militancy in the Fourth Republic. Scholarly agreement favours the fact that although kidnapping cuts across borders and occurs in virtually all states of the globe, it is more rampant in fragile states, particularly states that Huntington (1967) has referred to as characterised by “political decay”. The indices of political decay include chronic unemployment, which has forced many citizens to look for alternative means of survival and livelihood. To such people, kidnapping presents itself as an easier and lucrative business and way of surviving. Corruption is another sign of political decay, particularly in such places where politicians are known for it. This usually encourages kidnappers to go after them knowing that they can afford to pay the high ransom demanded. Tied to this is the issue of politics where politicians have been known to seek the assistance of kidnappers to kidnap opponents for political reasons. Of relevance to this is the issue of greed where kidnappers see kidnapping as an easier way of making money or a business competitor or rival is kidnapped so as to eliminate him for vying for a particular contract or business. In the instances of Boko Haram, illiteracy and religious reasons have been given. Most of the religious related kidnappings today have to do with illiteracy on the part of the members of such groups. Literacy and education grant people the ability to question and be rational in accepting doctrines and building a deeper understanding or moral judgement in decision-making. However, the bottom-line in all these reasons has to do with poverty, which today is the major propellant of people towards crime. Most of the perpetrators have confessed that they were driven into committing this act as a result of poverty.

The narrative of this chapter focuses primarily on gender dimension to kidnapping in Nigeria with special focus on the abductions of the Chibok and Dapchi schoolgirls. The chapter sees female involvement in kidnapping as either agents and/or victims. The strategic importance of kidnapping women and young girls as evident in the abduction of Chibok and Dapchi schoolgirls among others will also be considered. To do this, the chapter is divided into six sections. Section one introduces the chapter by arguing that as undesirable and illegal kidnapping is not an exclusive preserve of any country or region of the world. The second section focuses

on doing a conceptual exposition on kidnapping, while section three looks at the concept of gender from secular, religious and scholarly perspectives. Section four then investigates the gender dimension of kidnapping, particularly female involvement in terrorist and criminal organisations. This intention of this section is to situate the phenomenon of female involvement as both victims and perpetrators within a larger global perspective. As it relates to the prevalence of kidnapping, particularly of female by terrorist organisations as exemplified by terrorist groups around the world, section five looks at the reasons behind this. The personal, secular (profit motive) and religious justifications were considered. Finally, section six concludes this chapter.

Brief Conceptual Exposition on Kidnapping

Asuquo (2009) has noted that the term “kidnapping” is difficult to define with precision, because it varies from State to State and jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Walsh and Adrian (1983) equally shared the opinion that because kidnapping varies from country to country; hence, the concept will be uncertain and devoid of any straight-jacket definition. Nevertheless, of most of the concepts in Social Sciences, which suffer from definitional crises, there seems to be an academic and intellectual convergence as to what the concept of kidnapping really means or connotes and what the actual act entails. In its simplest form, kidnapping can be described as the act of taking someone or keeping someone or restricting the movement of someone against his/her wish. This forcible restriction could be for forcing them to work involuntarily without pay (making slaves of them) or to make ransom demands from the relatives of the victim.

In spite of this simple explanatory definition of the concept, other scholarly definitions have further thrown more light on its meaning. For instance, Walsh and Adrian (1983) have agreed that kidnapping is the unlawful seizure and detention of a person by force against their will. Abraham (2010) has espoused kidnapping as an act of seizing, taking away and keeping a person in custody either by force or fraud. The actual act itself includes snatching and seizing of a person for collecting a ransom in return or settle some scores of disagreements among people.

Thomas and Nta (2009) defined it as robbery of the highest rank. According to them, it is an organised and systematic robbery which, although, is not as deadly as armed-robbery, but more profitable. Hence, the profit motive encourages the perpetrators. Thus, in most of the cases, the victims are often released after payment of ransom. According to Ogabido (2009), “kidnapping” means to abduct, capture, carry off, remove or steal away a person(s). Dode (2007) saw kidnapping as a process of forcefully abducting a person or group of persons perceived to be the reasons behind the injustice suffered by another group. It is “a low-cost, high-yield terror tactics”. Inyang and Abraham (2013, p. 532) have, however, said that it is “the forcible seizure, taking away and unlawful detention of a person against his/her will. It is a common law offence and the key part is that it is unwanted act on the part of the

victim". Fage and Alabi (2017, p. 289) have also conceived it as "forceful or fraudulent abduction of an individual or a group of individuals for reasons ranging from economic, political, and religious to [struggle for] self-determination". Uzorma and Nwanegbo-Ben (2014, p. 132) also defined kidnapping as the "act of seizing and detaining or carrying away a person by unlawful force or by fraud, and often with a demand for ransom. It involves taking a person from their family forcefully without their consent with the motive of holding the person as a hostage and earning a profit from their family".

From the arrays of definitions above, it is clear that the act of kidnapping is motivated by certain reasons, chief among these being money or some form of economic gains. However, Zannoni (2003) has proposed a distinction between kidnapping as a criminal act (with economic motivation) and as politically induced (with political motivation). A third distinction, which cuts across both criminal and political aspects of kidnapping is the religious reasons as exemplified by the Boko Haram terrorists. Nwanunobi (2017), on the other hand, has attempted to classify this act according to the purpose for which it is perpetrated. For instance, he sees kidnapping for ransom (commonly reported) as more prevalent in the South-East and South-South (Niger Delta), kidnapping for ritual (religious) purposes (uncommonly reported) as more prominent in the South-West and North-Central regions, while abduction (mostly unreported) as more prominent in the North-East and North-West region. Thus, whether it is viewed as politically, religiously or economically motivated, kidnapping has become a business in which all are involved and has closed the divide between organised crime and terrorism (Abadinsky, 2010). The amount of money (ransom) demanded for by the kidnappers is a function of who the kidnappers are and the victim's personal/social/economic status in the society. It is on this note that we submit that (a) kidnapping is a purely economic business that is fuelled by greed and solely carried out for economic or monetary gains and (b) that the economic, social and perhaps the political standing of the victim in society plays a significant role in the amount of ransom or payment demanded by the kidnappers.

The Concept of Gender

Both the United Kingdom's Department of International Development (DFID) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) have attempted to delineate between gender and sex. According to DFID, the difference lies in that

Sex refers to the biological characteristics that categorises someone as either female or male; whereas gender refers to the practice of what it is to be female or male (Reeves and Baden 2000).

whereas UNESCO (2006) refers to gender as

The roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in our, our societies and our cultures. The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the

characteristics, attitudes and likely behaviours of both women and men (femininity and masculinity).

Ebohon (2006, p. 137) has equally noted that a woman is “the feminine component of the human species who apart from serving as vehicle for nurturing human life is also a producer, a consumer and equally endowed agent for fostering a wholesome political, social and economic development in society”. However, earlier definitions of gender were meant to distinguish social and biological aspects of the differences between men and women. As Nelson and Nelson (2010, p. 80) have noted, gender was “conceptualised as the socially defined roles, attitudes and values which society ascribes as appropriate for one sex or the other”. Thus, gender was conceptualised as marking a difference between the “sexes” which connotes a biological difference. However, later conceptualisation of gender was to assume a broader and sociological connotation. For instance, Eagle and Steffan’s (1984) view of gender is tied to power, and so they view it as a social construct based on the assumed power and position that a person possesses. By power, they imply the ability, which individuals have to make decisions and to behave as they please. On the other hand, Scott (1994) asserts that gender is “a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes”. However, scholars such as Lorber (1994) and Riley (1999) have pushed the concept far beyond the level of individual attributes and argue that it defines specific forms of social organisation. Lorber (1994, p. 13) describes gender as a set of social and cultural practices that influence the lives of women and men in given society”. In this manner, gender is culture specific and it is constructed through the institutions of the society (Agara, 2015, p. 118).

Despite the high profile and long usage of the concept, public and academic understanding of gender remains inadequate. There are two broad approaches to the concept of gender, the first is women equation and the second is synonym to biological sex (Agara, 2015). Nevertheless Okunade (2001, p. 1) described gender as a social construct of roles and responsibilities assigned to women and men, as determined by environmental, economic, political, cultural and religious factors. Ogundipe-Leslie (1988) also defined gender as the capacities and attributes assigned to persons based on their alleged sexual characteristics. In this case, gender is a process that sex-linked attributes acquire social meanings. Rhode (1990, p. 133) refers to sex as biologically based distinctions between men and women, while gender refers to their cultural constructions. Underlying these distinctions is the understanding that the men and women are differentiated by culture rather than chromosomes. Although gender constitutes a source of identity and set societal expectations, it is often used as a major criterion for the distribution of power and resources in the society. Accordingly, gender is a leading determinant of social stratification and inequality, coupled with other cultural institutions, ideologies and ideals (Newman, 1999, p. 238).

Between the late 1960s and early 1970s, two contradictory perspectives emerged as part of the general attempts to differentiate between women and men. One perspective focuses on the natural differences between the two genders, while the other assumes that women and men are basically the same (Nicholson, 1997, p. 3). This

dichotomy remains an enduring debate among feminist scholars. Radical and socialist feminist scholars have largely advocated for a woman-is-different-from-man perspective, mainly because they reject any politics that simply tried to replace men with women as lacking ambition. Rather, they called for a politics that will radically alter the status quo, including the ways a society differentiated the life activities and psyches of women and men (Agara, 2015). This debate has produced “gynocentric” feminism with special interest in the differences between women and men and emphasis on the unique situation and characteristics of women (Young, 1985, pp. 173–183).

On the issue of equality, it is interesting to note that scholars from both divides have used the Bible and the Qur'an to show that right before any empirical and epistemological studies were ever conducted; God had not intended the two sexes to be equal. For instance, Umahi and Okezie (2011, p. 321) have developed an elaborate Biblical argument that the creation story in Genesis 1–3, and other allusions such as in 1Corinthians 11:2–9 and Ephesians 5:22–25 are pointers to the fact that Adam (Man) and Eve (Woman) were not created equal. Adam was created before Eve and was created from man and for man (Umahi and Okezie, 2011, p. 325). White (1988, p. 25) emphasised this train of thought further by arguing that “in creation, God had made her [Eve] the equal of Adam”, but in the events following the fall of man, she was “placed in subjection to her husband” and it now behooves on man to cherish, love and protect the woman as a weak vessel.

Theologians have also used the Pauline admonition in 1Corinthians 11:3–9 that “the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is the man and the head of Christ is God” to further buttress the pecking order in the hierarchy. In furthering this line of argument, Elwell (1984, p. 497) has argued that the term head [*kephale*] is actually to be understood as designating a position of superiority and rule and so the leadership of the man could only imply a superiority in rank and authority. Other theologians have argued that going by Ephesians 5:21–25, the word “submit” there as used by Paul does have many shades of meaning which include “to place or arrange under, to submit oneself, render obedience, be submissive” (Moulton, 1978, p. 419). Although the Pauline’s phrase “submitting to one another” (Ephesians 5:22–24) seems to imply a symbiotic relationship, Adeyemo (2006, p. 1436) is however quick to suggest that “this divine arrangement does not imply that women are in any way inferior to men”.

Akao (2000, p. 85) has alluded to the fact that there are several copious references in the Bible “where greater premium or value is put on the males as against female counterparts, who are adjudged insignificant and grouped with children”. Given these arguments derived from the Bible, Manus (2004, p. 185) concludes that in ancient Judaism, women did not fare well, they were despised and denigrated. This is just as King and Stager (2001, p. 57) have also observed that “the law of Deuteronomy 24:1–4 gives only the husband, not the wife, the power to initiate divorce proceedings and at any time and for any reason, without an obligation to provide for her support”. In reviewing all these Biblical arguments, Umahi and Okezie (2011, p. 329) have finally averred that if God who never makes a mistake allows for the inequality of sexes, then we should respect it. Their final submission

is that just as women did not have the same status with men in the ancient world, they do not now nor ever will be because of the Biblical imperatives.

Women in classical Islamic societies are not better than in the Biblical days. For instance, as McKay et al. (2007, p. 237) have stated, “Arab tribal law gave women virtually no legal status. At birth girls could be buried alive by their fathers. They were sold into marriage by their guardians for a price. Their husbands could terminate the union at will. And women had virtually no property or succession rights”. However, as McKay et al. (2007) have equally noted, the Qur’an sought to improve the social position of women while the Hadith portrayed Muhammad’s wives (the actual number of which is debatable, but nine were known to have survived him) as models of piety and righteousness and “mothers of the believers”. Muhammad’s wives were also used as examples of juridical norms as they and other prominent women exercised political influence in the succession struggles that followed Muhammad’s death. Islamic scholars have alluded to the leading role played by Aisha (Muhammad’s favourite wife and daughter of Abu Bakr, the first Caliph after Muhammad’s death) in rallying support for the movement opposing Ali, who eventually succeeded Uthman in 656. Thus, although the Hadith usually depict women in terms of moral virtue, domesticity and saintly ideals, the same Hadith also show some prominent women in public and political roles (Stowasser, 1984, pp. 94–118).

The Qur’an, just like all religious writings of all traditions, contains moral precepts that have been variously interpreted by both scholars and adherents; nevertheless, the common consensus is that it accords women both spiritual and sexual equality with men with considerable economic rights. Thus, in the early Umayyad period, women played an active role in the religious, economic and political life of their communities. They owned properties and travelled widely and with men, participated in the public religious rituals and observances. However, as Coulson and Hinchcliffe (1982, p. 37) have noted, this did not last as the Islamic society changed so were the interpretation of the precepts of Qur’an. This new interpretation caused by rapid conquest and influx of large numbers of women slaves led to a decline in the status of women. Wealth replaced birth as the criterion of social status and men now viewed women as possessions, as a form of wealth. Thus, within Islamic and Muslim societies, the increasingly inferior status of women is revealed in three ways; in the relationship of women to their husbands, in the practice of veiling women and in the seclusion of women in harems.

In modern day Muslim communities, few issues are more sensitive than those of veiling and the seclusion of women. Although these practices have their roots in pre-Islamic times (McKay et al., 2007, p. 239), they are given pre-eminence in classical Islamic society of today. Initially, the veil was used to distinguish free women from slave women, that is, the wearing of veil seemed to be the mark of freeborn urban women as country and desert women did not wear veils because they interfered with their work in the fields. Traced to a Byzantine or Persian (modern day Iran) origin, the veil symbolises respectability and modesty and became one of the customs which the conquering Arab people adopted. The Qur’an contained no specific rule about the veil, though several interpretations and Hadith argued that it sanctions it. From wearing the veil, now all parts of the woman’s body are

considered *pudendal* (shameful because they are capable of arousing sexual desire) and not allowed to be seen in public. Even more restrictive than the veiling of women's freedom is the *pardah* which literally mean seclusion behind a screen or curtain—the harem system. This practice is believed to have been derived from Arabic contacts with other Eastern cultures. Although scholars are not clear as to the precise time the harem system began, however, Gerner (1984, p. 73) stated that “one and a half centuries after the death of the Prophet, the harem system was fully established ... Amongst the richer classes, the women were shut off from the rest of the household”. Thus, the harem becomes another symbol of male prestige and prosperity as well as a way to distinguish upper class women from peasants.

Gender Dimensions of Kidnapping

Although the UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent UN resolutions recognise the links between gender equality and international peace and security, their roles as victims and perpetrators of kidnapping have not been fully researched into. However, we must first note here that although women are not usually specific targets of kidnapping, apart from cases for ritual (religious) purposes, most kidnappers would prefer men of status for whom ransom can readily be paid. Nevertheless, women feature in kidnapping as both victims and perpetrators. Their involvement as victims underscores their vulnerabilities and the fact that they played multiple, sometimes overlapping, roles as victims and perpetrators. The multiplicity of roles they play in society sees them as peacemakers and peacebuilders, victims, change agents and care providers. Males are more likely than their female counterparts to be kidnapped, tortured, arbitrarily detained and forcibly recruited into armed struggles. Women and girls, on the other hand, are more likely than their male counterparts to be subjected to massive displacement, sexual violence, rape, forced labour, forced prostitution, forced abortions and enslavement by kidnappers.

As perpetrators, they are usually members of terrorist groups or organised criminal networks. Scholarly discussions as to why women join such groups are limited, but their presence in such groups has raised certain fundamental questions. These questions include: (1) why women join these groups and the type of roles they play, (2) why terrorist and organised criminal organisations recruit and operationalise women, and (3) how this process proceeds especially within societies (Muslim) that are usually highly restrictive of women's public role. Nevertheless, certain generalisable postulations can be offered. First, those women who joined and played active roles in such organisations do so for personal reason. This personal reason may be either because of a personal relationship with a man who is a member of the organisation and hence becomes instrumental to the purpose and activities of the organisation, or because of some personal tragedy such as the death of a family member or rape or some other personal grievances. As Cunningham (2007, p. 164) has suggested, “because a woman's place is ‘naturally’ private, her motivation to become ‘public’ would have to be personal”. On the other hand, this also implies “that once

this personal reason has been resolved she will willingly and naturally return to her normal, private, role”.

Second is that because they are likely to be least suspected of such acts, possibly because they are not generally considered credible or likely perpetrators of such dastardly acts, they can more easily carry it out and assist their organisations. Women's gender status naturally accords them many lee ways not offered to men. For instance, as women they project a non-threatening mien, which may preclude them from more intense scrutiny or suspicious at the most basic level. Finally, the popular conception of women as victims rather than perpetrators of violence has led to little or no attention being paid to them. Given these factors therefore, terrorist and criminal organisations have tended to be more adaptive by altering their techniques and targets. As present happenings and instances have shown in Nigeria, terrorist and criminal organisations have adopted a series of innovations, as they deliberately select targets considered taboo and locales where such violence is least expected as schools and relaxation spots. These innovations are then rapidly diffused, especially in the modern era of instantaneous and global communications. Thus, the use of women as hijackers and kidnappers is an example of one type of tactical adaptation employed by these organisations.

While the use of women as active participants in kidnapping and in terrorist and criminal organisations may be novel in Nigeria, a cursory look at other regions has shown that women are fully incorporated into the numerous activities of such organisations. In Europe, women who have joined such organisations as the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA, Basque Homeland and Unity), the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Italian Red Brigades (RD) have actively participated in the organisations' activities as either suicide bombers or baits to lure their victims to places where they could be easily kidnapped. Particularly, in Italy, although women generally are not more than 20% of the total membership of such organisations, however, majority of the women drawn into these organisations function as regulars and in leadership roles (Weinberg and Eubank, 2006, pp. 250–252). In the North American region, women have played a central and important role in the Puerto Rican nationalist movement, particularly the Puerto Rican Armed Forces of National Liberation (FLAN) and the *Los Macheteros* (the Machete Wielders or the Puerto Rican Peoples' Army) that specialise in extortion and kidnapping. To date, women affiliated with these organisations have played mixed roles in a variety of capacities including leadership positions. In Latin American nations such as Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Mexico, and especially in two of the notorious terrorist organisations in this region, the FARC and Shining Path, women are ascending through the groups' ranks, with women bearing the title “Commander”. In these two organisations, known for terrorist and criminal acts such as kidnapping, women join while young, undergo similar training as their male counterpart and often remain as members for life.

The South Asian experience shares some parallel with Middle East and North Africa (MENA) especially in their use of women as suicide bombers and socio-cultural norms that idealises sacrifice and martyrdom. Roughly, half of the membership of the Liberation Tigers for Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is women who are recruited

as children into the Black Tigers to perform similar roles as their male counterparts. An instance is the 1991 assassination of Rajiv Gandhi by a young Tamil woman. The LTTE is not the only organisation known for the use of women as perpetrators, among the Sikh militant women have participated in a number of roles including armed combat. The importance and ready inclusion of women in Sikhs' criminal organisations and campaigns is derived from the fact that Sikhism does not draw a straight line between male and female equality. As Mahmood (1996, pp. 230–231) has noted, “while virtues of courage, bold action and strong speech are consonant with masculinity as understood in the West, among the Sikhs these qualities are treated as neither masculine nor feminine, but simply as Sikh values. Women may be bound to the kitchen and may have babies in their arms, but they are still fully expected to behave as soldiers, if necessary”.

In the MENA region, female participation in terrorist and criminal organisations have been restricted to as suicide bombers and kidnappers. History has recorded female participants in terrorist organisations such as the likes of Leila Khaled, who hijacked a plane in 1969; Randa Nabulsi who was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for planting a bomb in a Jerusalem supermarket in 1969, Etaf Aliyan who was to drive a car loaded with explosives into a Jerusalem police station in 1987 and the detonation of a suicide bomb by Wafa Idris in 2002. The involvement of women in the Palestinian struggle has “open[ed] a whole new demographic pool of potential bombers” (Cunningham, 2007, p. 161).

As victims, women have been kidnapped primarily for many reasons. The most common reason particularly in the South-West and Middle-Belt of Nigeria have been for ritual purposes (Oyewole, 2016). Driven by greed and the desire to be rich quick, people have consulted herbalists for moneymaking rituals. The perpetrators and their collaborators can only explain why women are the major targets in these moneymaking rituals. However, the ease with which women are lured away from their safety zones to places where it is easier for the perpetrators to kidnap and kill them for such rituals can be an answer to this. In many cases, people, uncles, boy-friends, girlfriends and those they generally trust, lure them, particularly with money and other forms of gratifications.

Of prominence in certain parts of the globe is kidnapping or bride abductions. Bride kidnapping is a term often loosely applied to instances of bride “abducted” against the will of her parents, even if she is willing to marry the “abductor”. This is popular and traditional amongst certain nomadic peoples of Central Asia and it is quite notorious in Kyrgyzstan since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The term “bride kidnapping” is used to describe the harmful practice of a man or group of men abducting a young girl or woman for the purpose of forcing her into a marriage to which she would not otherwise consent to (Taylor, 2017). It has been estimated that more than 11,800 cases of bride kidnapping occur annually in Kyrgyzstan, and that over 2000 of those women and girls reported being raped after their abduction (UN, 2013). Taylor's (2017) study has hinted that around 20% of Kyrgyz women and girls had been kidnapped for marriage. According to Muldoon and Casabonne (2017) “bride kidnapping” follows a normative succession of events:

The first event is the abduction, which involves a young man and his male friends taking a young woman (typically by force or deception) into a car, and she is then taken to his parent's house or the home of a close relative.... Frequently, the girls are raped immediately after the kidnapping.... The second event occurs when a member of the groom's household presents the girl with a marriage scarf.... Often she is physically and psychologically coerced to submit and marry her kidnapper. Placing the marriage scarf over her hair indicates that she accepts the marriage. In the third event, the girl is asked to write a letter of consent to the marriage to her family... [and is subject to] extreme social pressure to stay, and most girls make this choice even if it goes against their true wishes.... The letter is the precursor of the fourth event, when the groom's relatives send an official apology; they traditionally bring their daughter's letter of "consent," sheep, and many other gifts.

The narrative above seems to give the kidnapped bride an option and a choice to refuse to marry her kidnapper, either by rejecting the marriage scarf or refusing to write the letter. However, in reality, such an option or choice is not given due to social pressure or death in the hand of the scorned kidnapper/suitor.

Boko Haram's notoriety as kidnappers started on December 5, 2011, when a British and an Italian citizen were kidnapped by the group in Kebbi. In January 2012, the group also kidnapped several road users in Zamfara and joined Al Qaeda to abduct a German citizen in Kano (Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021). Boko Haram's campaign of kidnapping became clearly international from February 2013, starting with the abduction of a seven-member French family in northern Cameroon, which included four children (The Guardian, 19 April 2013). These among others were followed by the abductions of more than a dozen government officials and their families in Borno State. In May 2013, Boko Haram carried out a mass assault on a police barracks in Bama, Borno State in which 12 Christian women and children were captured (Agence France-Presse, 13 May 2013).

Boko Haram achieved the interjection between criminal and religious/terrorist organisations' act of kidnapping of people for money in Nigeria with two prominent incidents. On Wednesday, April 16, 2014, over 100 innocent Nigerian schoolgirls from the Government Girls Secondary School in Borno State were reported to have been kidnapped by Boko Haram. The students were abducted from their school located at Chibok Local Government of Borno State while preparing to write the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) at about 9 pm (Vanguard Newspaper, Wed. April 16, 2014). The actual number of the girls abducted became controversial with the Vanguard Newspaper quoting Major General Chris Olukolade as reporting that only 8 girls were missing and 14 of the abducted girls have escaped. The Vanguard Newspaper was later to report that the military has admitted the error in the numbers and collaborated the school's principal's report that about 129 students were abducted out of which only 14 were able to escape (See Vanguard Newspaper, Friday, April 18, 2014). The actual identity of the girls abducted also generated hues and cry but this was laid to rest when the Northern Christian Forum released about 180 names of some of the girls, many of which are Christians while asking for a N50million compensation for each of them (Guardian, Monday May 5).

Just three weeks after the Chibok incident, Boko Haram was reported as abducting eleven teenage girls between the ages of 12 and 15 in Warabe village of Gwoza Local Government of Borno State. On February 19, 2018, at 5:30 pm, 110

schoolchildren, aged between 11–19 years old were kidnapped by the Boko Haram terrorist group from the Government Girls' Science and Technical College (GGSTC) Dapchi, which is located in Bulabulin, Yunusari Local Government area of Yobe State, in the northeast part of Nigeria (Sahara Reporters 2018; Aljazeera News 2018; Searcey 2018). Five schoolgirls died on the same day of their kidnapping, while all the others were released in March 2018 except for the lone Christian girl, Leah Sharibu, who was said to have refused to abandon her faith and convert to Islam (Guardian, 2018). As was the case four years earlier in the Chibok kidnapping, it took the Nigerian government days to respond and then responded with several assurances that the kidnappers would soon be apprehended and that all of the girls would soon be returned safely to their homes. Like in the Chibok incident, those who had been released were via ransom payments, and with only one low-level kidnapper having been apprehended and standing trial (World News, 2018; Time Magazine 2018; Wall Street Journal 2017). The ransom payment made for the release of the girls further enriched and afforded the Boko Haram terrorist group to procure more sophisticated weapons to prosecute further killings, pillaging and kidnappings (BBC, 2017).

As Pearson (2019) had noted, the tactics of abduction of women by Boko Haram is deliberate as the leader, Abubakar Shekau is engaged in a retaliatory war with the Nigerian security services for taking female members of known jihadists leaders' families as hostages; a strategy that was aimed at discouraging them or weakening their resolve to continue their insurgency. Although both men and women are probable targets of kidnapping and abduction, they are exploited for different ends. Both the Dapchi and Chibok abductions in particular, and the many of such kidnappings over time perpetrated by the Boko Haram group, the Islamic State of West Africa (ISWAP) and others, reveal the fundamental power of terrorism which is to produce widespread fear. It was this result that the Shekau's video of more than 100 mainly Muslim schoolgirls from Dapchi was meant to achieve. It was to demonstrate the humane and "mercy" of the terrorists and appeal to the religious sensibilities of the local Muslim audience with a view to winning them to their side and getting their sympathy for their cause. However, on a more fundamental level, and as Weinberg and Eubank (2006, p. 8) have stated, it also demonstrates the deliberate choice of terrorists' targets. They argued that the primary aim of terrorists "includes spreading fear, creating publicity for the group's cause, provoking the authorities into overreacting, retaliating against a perceived enemy, and raising the morale of people the terrorist group hopes to lead", and to be able to achieve this maximally, they choose "soft targets" which can provide these effects.

Doctrinal/Secular Justifications for Female Kidnappings (Chibok and Dapchi)

For the criminal organisations, it is possible that greed and enrichment could be sufficient reasons for their involvement in kidnapping. However, for Boko Haram involvement, we need to look deeper, particularly, into the doctrinal basis and

justification provided by Islam, because this provides them with the necessary justification to continue such act of kidnapping. Religious grounds and precepts have also provided perpetrators grounds and basis to justify violence against humanity. In this respect, virtually all religions are guilty only that some are guiltier than others (Agara, 2012). For instance, history is replete of the barbaric killings, pillage and destruction of human beings and property caused by Crusaders in the name of Christianity (Lewis, 1984). Today, Islam has taken over using the Qur'an and the Hadith as basis to perpetuate mass destructions of innocent victims in the name of a jihad. It is in this respect that religion, especially Islam, has become and used as a means rather than an end in itself thereby making religion ideological.

As an ideology, religion therefore serves similar functions as political ideologies and these are (1) polarise and mobilise populations towards common objectives; (2) create a sense of security and belongingness by providing a system of norms and values to which all members could identify, and (3) provide the basis for the justification and rationalisation of human or members' behaviour. According to Islamic laws, it is lawful and legitimate for Muslim faithful to wage war anywhere and everywhere against four types of enemies: infidels, apostates, rebels and bandits. Of these four only the first two count as a religious obligation for all Muslims, hence a jihad. An infidel is an unbeliever in the Islamic faith who can be converted either through peaceful means or through war and conquest. An apostate is a former believer who has either left the faith or renounced it for other religious beliefs. Also of equal justificatory significance and importance is that according to the Muslim tradition, the world is divided into two houses: the House of War (*Dar al-Harb*) and the House of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*). The Chibok girls' abduction is justified under *Dar-al-Harb* which accepts that they are to be regarded as "spoils of war" and as slaves. It is on this basis that the reference to the girls as spoils of war and as slaves in the video shown on social media found justification.

The Qur'anic acceptance of slavery parallels that of the Old and New Testaments of the Christian Bible, but it also prescribed a just and humane treatment of slaves. In addition to their being treated well, fed and clothe, not punished severely, the Qur'an also urges owners whose slaves ask for their freedom to give them the opportunity to buy it (Segal, 2001, p. 35, Esposito, 1988, p. 45). Women slaves serve as concubines and in Muslim societies their sexual services are not considered degrading. Of equal importance is the kidnapping of women for the purpose of providing a ready source of female for coercive sexual relations and sex economies under duress. Obviously, while it is possible to conceive of young men joining criminal organisations because of the lure of money and the easy good life it offers, the lure to join terrorist groups like Boko Haram can only be due to an affinity of the group's ideological underpinnings and what these stands for or implied.

Just as Zoe (2014) has noted, it is incredibly difficult to keep these virile young men living a life of violence and insecurity perpetually in the bush without access to sex, women and the social trappings of manhood. In consonance with Muslim belief and culture, a sexually frustrated person is dangerous to the community, hence, Islam vehemently abhors sexual abstinence and expects that every man and woman, unless physically or financially incapable, should marry and be sexually active. As

such, kidnapping women fulfils this crucial military, social and religious role. They are necessary to keep the men fully motivated and if the only way to acquire them is by kidnapping, then so be it.

Maiangwa and Agbiboa (2014) have muted, this tendency is not peculiar not is it exclusive to Boko Haram alone. For instance, as they have shown, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been known to kidnap and abduct "wives" for its commanders in raids that have spanned well over three decades. Going by the example of Sierra Leone, particularly during the years of protracted conflicts (1991–2001), "operation fine girl" was a regular occurrence during which young girls and women were regularly kidnapped and abducted, forced into sexual servitude or into marriage with members and commanders. Thus, for the terrorists, sexual violence becomes a weapon against the government and the civilian populace, both to instil fear and a sense of insecurity as well as a demonstration of its power and impunity (Witness 2001). To avoid sexual violence and the horror of being repeatedly raped by whosoever desire sex, following witness reports, many of the girls have learnt to opt for becoming sexual property of specific males—a phenomenon that is commonly known as "bush marriages" or "AK-47 marriages" (Maiangwa and Agbiboa 2014, Denov and Maclure, 2006, pp. 73–85). This succinctly paints the picture why Boko Haram deliberately looks out for girls to kidnap and what the captured girls have to go through in order to survive the ordeal of being captives and "slaves". It goes without saying, therefore, that the more the male membership grows numerically, the more the urgent need to find and provide sexual outlets for them. Hence kidnapping and abductions of female and women may persist indefinitely.

Oyewole and Onuoha (2021) provide strategic, organisational and operational explanations for Boko Haram's kidnapping of girls and women. In the cases of Chibok and Dapchi schoolgirls, Boko Haram sought to use kidnapping as instrument of strategic communication of its displeasure for Western education and value, which tends to reverse the roles of women through human capital development in conservative Islamic societies. The strategic value of this means cannot be taken for granted, given that Boko Haram translate to mean "Western education is forbidden". Besides, abducted women and young girls provide organisational support services to the insurgents, as they are involved in cleaning, cooking and other domestic chores in their camps (Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021). In operation, they help the insurgents in transportation of arms, ammunition, food and other logistics, delivery of message, spying and serve as human shield against counter-insurgency forces. More importantly, they have become highly instrumental to suicide bombing campaign of the insurgent. Accordingly, Boko Haram was responsible for 118 of the total 161 cases of female suicide bombing that was recorded globally between 2014 and 2017 (Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021, p. 39).

The abduction and kidnapping of the Chibok girls had been further justified by the Al-Shabaab terrorist group, which had been linked to the training of Boko Haram militants, because of what they perceived as the Nigerian government abuses against Muslims. Since the group's stand against Western education is well orchestrated, educating women is seen as the ultimate slap in their collective faces. Hence, in a perverse logic, the girls were seen as being rescued from the Nigerian state

injustices of subjecting them to Western education. On one of its Facebook handle (Al-Andalus), the Al-Shabaab group has equally asked its followers and sympathisers to comment on the fate of the abducted girls; whether (1) they should be released unconditionally, or (2) they should be given freedom for a ransom, or (3) they be given to jihadists so that 200 more boys can be born to join the mujahideen (Thomas and Ahmed 2014). Ironically, all these three options are well endowed by and permissible under Sharia Law and the Hadith if the girls are labelled as unbelievers or infidels.

Conclusion

Kidnapping seems to flourish particularly in fragile states and conflict-prone countries, as politically motivated militias, organised crime and the drugs mafia fill the vacuum left by government. The adoption of this *modus operandi* by religious terrorist organisations has led to further complications, making it almost impossible to distinguish between kidnapping by organised criminal organisations and terrorist groups such as the Nigerian Boko Haram. This has blurred the fault-line (differences) between these two as there is now a convergence as to the motive, which is purely for monetary gains, although religious terrorist organisations may have additional reason other than purely monetary gains. The combination of these two illegal organisations using kidnapping as a *modus operandi* has revealed countries that are not settled or with protracted social conflicts as kidnapping hotspots.

We conclude on a note of caution that there is a great possibility that Boko Haram may be abducting girls and women to use as future recruiters or suicide bombers. In espionage parlance, they are called “sleepers” who can be “awakened” later in the future for certain jobs such as suicide bombing or targeted assassination. The Russian KGB had many of such “sleepers” deliberately planted in America as American children and families during the heydays of the Cold War. This submission has been vindicated by recent news reports from the dailies (June 4, 2014) which have actually showed pictures of two women who were arrested for recruiting for Boko Haram. Other reports are indicative of this possibility. For instance, since 2013, with a change in tactics by the Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF), male supporters of Boko Haram have become uniquely vulnerable to detention and abuse. The vulnerability of male supporters to arrest and detention has also initiated a similar change and responsive shift in Boko Haram tactics. Women are now being used as “mule” by Boko Haram for obvious reasons, to transport, deliver and disguise movements of weapons and detonate improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Many cases of veiled women or disguised men that engaged in Boko Haram operations and logistics have been captured and documented in extant literature (Maiangwa and Agbibo, 2014; Oriola, 2017; Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021).

This adaptive response of using women as instruments is not exclusive to Boko Haram but rather showed that they have been properly trained in the world-wide strategy of religious terrorism. In Iraq, for example, women were similarly deployed

to smuggle arms and execute suicide bombings, during a clamp-down on Al Qaeda in the mid-2000s (Sjoberg and Gentry 2011, p. 15; Bloom 2011, p. 210). This instrumental use of women is to exploit and capitalise on women's superior ability to evade security checks, cache weapons in clothing, and attract less suspicion as suicide bombers. This tactical use of women has a historical antecedent as evidenced in liberation campaigns such as the Algerian resistance against the French, in which women were initially ordered to smuggle weapons (Minne and Clarke 2007, p. 344, Horne 2002, p. 124). It is also such reminiscent of the behaviour of rebel movements in conflict zones in other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, in tactically exploiting women. Civil conflicts in Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Rwanda have all witnessed gender-based violence (GBV) in the abduction, sexual violence and forced marriage and conscription of enemy women into insurgent groups (Mazurana and McKay 2003, pp. 11–17; Turshen 2001, p. 5; Coulter et al. 2008, pp. 9–12).

If the abduction of women by Boko Haram is tactical, other violence against Christian women appears primarily punitive. In Maiduguri, in August 2013, a Christian student reported an attack by Boko Haram on her university accommodation: the men were murdered, the women segregated into Muslim and non-Muslims, and the Christian women systematically raped (Barkindo et al. 2013, p. 23). Such attacks on Christian women by Boko Haram can be regarded as an extension of other institutionalised and long-term discriminatory practices against them in northern regions (Onapajo and Uzodike 2012, p. 32). Women have faced broad discriminatory practices in both the professional and domestic spheres. They have been targeted in acid attacks for “un-Islamic” practices, such as a failure to wear the hijab, or for taking a job (Turaki 2010). Women are also often accused of “dishonouring Islam”. In 2006, riots ensued in which more than 50 Christians were killed, mostly women and children, after a Christian female teacher confiscated a Qur'an from a student in Bauchi (Alao 2009, p. 40). This generic culture of discrimination against Christians has enabled the escalation in recent violence.

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Chapter 13

Nigeria and the Transnationalisation of Kidnapping in the Lake Chad Region and the Gulf of Guinea



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Abstract This chapter explores the transnational nature of the operation of the Nigerian-based kidnappers, that is, coastal militants or pirates in the Gulf of Guinea and Islamist extremists in the Lake Chad region. The expansion of transnational kidnapping orchestrated by the Jihadist terrorist groups such as Boko Haram/ISWAP in northern Nigeria, whose heinous activities have spill-over effects and contagiously impacted neighbouring nations such as Chad, Cameroon and Niger has redefined national sovereignty. The activities of the transnational armed militant and criminal groups in the Niger Delta and other coastal areas of Nigeria have also accounted for significant portion of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. These among others need to interrogate the idea of nationality and transnationality in this context. Beyond some basic conceptual clarifications and theoretical analysis, this chapter explores the dark side of globalisation as evident in Nigerian-based transnational kidnapping. It pays attention to causes, manifestation, hotspots, implications and possible control of transnational kidnapping, as regards various borders that Nigeria shared with other countries and the international waters, ranging from the North to the South and the East to the West.

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Introduction

This chapter explores the transnational nature of the operation of the Nigerian based kidnappers, that is, pirates in the Gulf of Guinea and Islamist extremists in the Lake Chad region. In recent times, transnational crime has gained prominence in academic discourse and policy debate (Akpan, 2010; Madsen, 2009; Passass, 2000; Shelley, 1995; UNODC, 2010; Ojo, 2020; Chapsos, and Hamilton, 2019; Albanese, 2014; Lampe, 2012). The study of transnational organised crime is multi-disciplinary, involving diverse scholarly domains (Lampe, 2012). Despite its diverse coverage, many scholars have argued that the phenomenon represents a dual threat to both local and international security (Savona and Williams, 2012; Finckenauer and Chin, 2006). Acknowledging the challenge it poses to the global community, little attention has been offered to tame the monster of cross-border criminal activities across the world. Hence, insufficient attention provides an enabling environment to expand its operational tentacles within the global space.

The alarming rate of kidnapping across the world has become a concern for security experts and global leaders. Countries such as Venezuela, Georgia, Afghanistan, India, Iraq, Palestine, Kenya, Pakistan, Colombia, Algeria, Sudan, Yemen, and Nigeria among several others have witnessed the booming economy of kidnapping. Some of the countries that have experienced a series of kidnapping cases have been categorised as failed or failing states. In such countries, there is a high level of corruption, governance failure, unemployment, poverty, inequality, and deprivation of basic needs of life. Thus, economic and social deprivation is highlighted as the root cause of 'kidnapping epidemics' (Bailliet, 2010). Although kidnapping may seem forbidden in a modern democratic system, specifically in Nigeria, the inability of the security agencies to prevent the abduction of innocent citizens or apprehend the offenders in many cases has resulted in frustration and declining trust in the government. Unlike before when the rich are the major target of criminal syndicates, kidnapping in Nigeria now affects the rich, middle-class, employed, unemployed, and the general poor segment of the society. Kidnapping takes place in most of the major highways in Nigeria. It is also evident in some Nigerian states across the borderlines, thus serving as initiating point for its transnational launch. Oyewole (2016a) maintained that foreigners and their investments have been the soft target of the kidnapping in Nigeria. Furthermore, the insurgent groups in the Northern regions and the militant groups in the coastal region of Eastern Nigeria have respectively developed transnational capabilities through their attacks across the Nigerian borders.

Transnational kidnapping is an emerging organised crime, threatening the local, national, and global peace and security. The emergence of globalisation has revolutionised the political, cultural, economic, and security processes. It has played a pivotal role in weakening the traditional borders of nation-states. The phenomenon of transnationalism claims that states are now experiencing a declining capacity to control their borders. With the trend of globalisation that promotes communication through information communication technology, the traditional borders enforced by the nation-states have become extraneous (Huff, 2014). Transnational organised

crime like kidnapping has recently been recognised within international political space, while it has garnered mammoth attention among the global policymakers (UNODC, 2010). Cross-border exchange and interconnectedness are the strong pillars of transnationalism (Tedeschi et al., 2020). Over the years, the emerging technological breakthrough and innovations have facilitated a sharp increase in transnational crimes. As one of the elements of transnational organised crimes, kidnapping has metamorphosed from local to regional threats, making it difficult to combat within the national space (Hufnagel, 2021). The rising borderlessness of criminal activities has provided an opportunity for cross-border criminal groups around the world. The criminal groups have continued to expand their operational locations as a result of international laws that respect the sovereignty of each state, thus making the transnational organised crimes difficult to combat by the nations around the world (Castle, 1997).

The expansion of transnational kidnapping often orchestrated by the Jihadist terrorist group in northern Nigeria, whose heinous activities have its spillover effects and contagiously impacted in neighbouring nations such as Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, has redefined the sovereignty of the nation-state. Moreover, it should be acknowledged that the activities of the transnational non-state armed group like Boko Haram/ISWAP in the north and Nigerian based pirates in the Gulf of Guinea transcend the national jurisdictional sovereignty of a nation. These have necessitated the reconceptualisation of the idea of a traditional border (Foyou et al., 2018). This chapter begins with some basic conceptual clarifications and theoretical analysis. It further explores the dark side of globalisation as it applies to transnational kidnapping. Then, attention is given to hotspots of transnational kidnapping, particularly as regards the various countries that share land borders with Nigeria which include Chad, the Republic of Niger, Cameroon, and the maritime border in the Gulf of Guinea of the Atlantic Ocean.

Conceptualising Kidnapping

Kidnapping is a global crisis that has been perpetrated for ages with accompanied effects all over the world. In a global context, kidnapping despite being as old as the history of man became prominent in the seventeenth century as children from rich families of Britain were kidnapped for ransom (Tzanelli, 2006). The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries recorded massive trading of people against their will in what can be regarded as kidnapping for ransom during the slave trade era (Ojo, 2013). Communities were set against each other in the struggle to have 'goods' to sell at the slave market to the Europeans that barraged Africa for such inhumane activity. The entire human history can be argued to be coloured by various forms of kidnapping, since man could record his history and events around his environment.

Kidnapping is synonymous with hostage-taking in most literature (Wilson, 2005; Oyewole, 2015). It is expedient to state that there is a difference between hostage-taking and kidnapping, although the two concepts or actions have been

used interchangeably by many authors. Critical to the difference between kidnapping and hostage-taking is the issue of 'location', and this is based on the fact that the location in a hostage situation is known to the authority or victims while the location in a kidnap scenario is not known to the government or even the families of the victims (Douglas et al., 2006).

Kidnapping is a felonious act with a sanction provision under Section 364 of the Criminal Code Act (1990) and Section 11 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria's Terrorism Prevention Act (2011). Abduction or kidnapping is defined under the Criminal Code Act as a felony involving the unlawful seizure, confinement, or loss of personal liberty of a person against their will. It occurs when a person intentionally kidnaps, detains, and threatens to kill or injure another person (referred to as 'the hostage') in order to compel a third party—namely, a state, an international or non-governmental organisation, or a natural or legal person or group of persons—to perform or refrain from performing an act or acts as an explicit or implicit condition for the hostage's release (Criminal Code Act, 1990).

Based on the clarification made above, kidnapping can therefore be described as the seizing, detainment, or removal of a person by unlawful force often with the demand for ransom which shows the nonconsensual abduction of a person possibly by unknown persons while the victim is detained in a facility not known to the government or the families of victims (Douglas et al., 2006). This definition captures the anguish and traumatic experience of victims in the hands of the kidnappers who often make ridiculous demands on both the government and family members of their unfortunate victims. Nevertheless, this chapter takes a loose approach to the definition of kidnapping. In this case, it describes the phenomenon as a forceful abduction of persons against their will to receive ransom from the families and associates of the victims or government before their release. This chapter emphasises the place where victims are kidnapped, and the act of forcefully seizing people against their will.

Transnational Kidnapping

Transnationalisation can be considered as any activity that extends beyond the horizon or boundary of a state. It revolves around economic, political, and cultural processes. The phenomenon highlights the cross-border activities that transcend the control of a nation-state (Huff, 2014). Recently, literature has recognised transnationalism as one of the fundamental components of globalisation that cannot be detached (Zenn, 2014; Oyewole, 2015, 2016a). Transnationalisation defines as any activities conducted beyond the territorial border of a state (Faist, 2010). Under Article 3.2 of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Crime, an offence is transnational if:

1. It is committed in more than one state.
2. It is committed in one state but a substantial part of its preparation, planning, direction, or control takes place in another state.

3. It is committed in one state but involves an organised criminal group that engages in criminal activities in more than one state.
4. It is committed in one state but has substantial effects in another state (UNODC, 2004).

In this chapter, transnational kidnapping is a forceful cross-border abduction, orchestrated by non-state armed groups to achieve economic gain. We contextualised transnational kidnapping within the cross-border organised crimes committed in more than one state. It dwells within the domain of an abduction that is carried out within a particular state but has a negative footprint in another state. More often, such criminal activities are carefully planned in one state and executed in neighbouring countries. This phenomenon is situated within transnational organised crime, driven by criminal syndicates for an economic reason with its implication on international border control. It is believed that such criminal networks are beyond the capacity of a single state. Thus, international cooperation is required in combating such criminal operation (UNODC, 2010).

Transnational crime such as kidnapping has been considered a threat to both national and regional security. Criminal networks often provide a structure that out-sources resources for the execution of operations. Resources such as weapons and logistical support from criminal gangs in other countries require the collaboration of diverse non-state armed groups for effective execution (Forest, 2020). Kidnapping is one of the elements of transnational organised crimes, threatening the security of people at the local, national, regional, and global levels. The major actors in kidnapping operations often involved professional criminal gangs who engage in human trafficking, armed robbery, and illicit trade such as firearms and drugs. In many countries, the illicit profit derived from kidnapping has been used to finance terrorism (Bailliet, 2010).

Background to Transnationalisation of Kidnapping in Nigeria

Kidnapping in Nigeria is a network of a criminal syndicate and an organised crime with possible reach beyond the shores of the country. It is more than just a crime now as it has become a lucrative enterprise from the north to the entire south (Munshi, 2021) while also showing the vulnerability and the deplorable state of the state to tackle the menace. Kidnapping is not an entirely strange crime in Nigeria owing to reports of kidnap for rituals in the country (Oyewole, 2016b). Similarly, politics also account for some rate of kidnappings in the country, especially during election periods as political opponents kidnap each other to win elections. Elections in Nigeria are an exercise with immense danger for actors and even for non-actors as political hoodlums carry out several nefarious activities, including the kidnapping of perceived opponents or relatives of their political opponents for the elections (Ani and Nweke, 2014). This shows that the purpose of kidnapping determines the categorisation of kidnapping, also the approach to assess and tackle the crime.

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria, which primarily consists of Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers states at a time was the epicentre of kidnapping in the country, and this was arguably due to the several years of neglect by the government of the region even though the region contributes the greater portion of Nigeria's revenue. The region became the centre for the kidnapping of expatriates working at different oil rigs in the region. Unfortunately, the neglect suffered by the Niger Delta people has become the symbol of every other region of the country by successive governments in the country. This has raised some security challenges in the country. All the regions of the country suffer from various forms of challenges like terrorism, banditry, and kidnapping, among others. These unabated challenges have permeated the entire Nigerian society, raising fear and lack of safety around the country. Despite the myriad of challenges facing the country, there seems to be a common denominator in these challenges and that is kidnapping. Similarly, there seems to be a nexus between the various security challenges in the country and kidnapping, as would be seen later in this study.

Evidence from the literature suggests that cross-border criminal syndicates are expanding their enclaves. These groups engage in various forms of cross-border kidnapping for ransom (Onuoha, 2013). In Nigeria, different non-state armed groups with different motivations engage in transnational kidnapping. In the northern part of the country, Boko Haram now Islamic State of West Africa (ISWAP) has continued to employ kidnapping as a dependable source of funding for their activities. For instance, in February 2018, Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of a family in neighbouring Cameroon, with the ransom payment of USD 3 million (OECD, 2018). In the Gulf of Guinea, the Niger Delta militants have been a major non-state armed group engaged in piracy, hostage, and kidnapping. One important explanation of transnational kidnapping is that cooperation between different international networks remains a potent instrument in achieving operational goals (Mittelman and Johnston, 1999).

Nigeria's persistent conflict with insurgency groups, as well as government corruption, poses a danger to the country's stability and democratic integrity. Boko Haram, one of Africa's major Islamist militant organisations, has carried out terrorist operations against religious and political organisations, local police, and the military, as well as indiscriminately assaulting people in bustling marketplaces and communities, since 2011. In April 2014, the kidnapping of over 200 girls from their school in Chibok brought public attention to Boko Haram's persistent danger and the government's failure to manage it. Some of the victims escaped or lost lives in captivity, while 103 of them have been released as a result of discussions sponsored by the International Committee of the Red Cross between Boko Haram and the Nigerian government (Oyewole, 2016c). Following a spike in Boko Haram-related violence in 2014 and 2015, the number of people killed by the organisation has dropped drastically. The Nigerian military has pushed Boko Haram out of several provinces in northeastern Nigeria, with help from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, but the group still controls some villages and pockets of territory and continues to launch deadly suicide attacks and kidnap civilians, mostly women and children. In February 2018, a Boko Haram group called as Islamic State of West Africa kidnapped over a hundred pupils. A little over a month later, they were released.

In the previous decade, the country had an average of 1000 kidnappings every year. Kidnapping is a lucrative business for bandits, ritualists, fraudsters (419 scams), and baby factories all throughout the nation, according to the actors in the industry (Oyewole, 2016a). However, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Boko Haram, Ansaru, and other politically motivated armed organisations in the nation are using this approach as a warfare tactic. The Gulf of Guinea has become the den of pirates specialised in kidnapping people on the gulf. The report of kidnapping on the Gulf of Guinea has become a constant screech (Adenubi, 2021) with little or help from the authority. This has grievous implications on the economy of the country while this act just like in other terrain or context has been incentivised by the government. For instance, in a recent kidnapping by pirates on the Gulf of Guinea, ransom as high as \$300,000 was paid to secure the release of the victims (Campbell and Rotberg, 2021). The negligence of the government to the plight and conditions of its people has fueled this heart-wrenching development.

The Islamic State of West Africa Province or Daesh a subset of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria recently has been in the news for their various activities especially since the alleged death of Shekau, the leader of the dreaded Boko Haram sect. The ISWAP has its operational geography within the northeastern part of Nigeria and the entire Lake Chad region. To establish a caliphate, the group has been involved in various operations, like trying to determine the socio-economic activities of places under their control. One of the ways the group tries to accomplish this is by imposing 'zakat' on members of the society within their jurisdiction (Ukpe, 2021). A critical look into this 'governance' approach by the dreaded group shows some control over a helpless group of people, and this in a way can be viewed as kidnapping because the outcome is to collect money from the people although wrapped around religion. Their freedom is dependent on their ability to meet with the financial levy imposed on residents of the area controlled by the dreaded group.

Globalisation and Transnationalisation of Crime

The last few decades have witnessed the emergence of border theory (Newman, 2006). The conventional border theories have relied on the idea of the sovereignties of states, respect for territoriality, and homogenous ethnicities that are domiciled within the state (Foyou et al., 2018). These have characterised the unsophisticated approach towards border theories. However, these conceptions have been contested by contemporary border theories aided by globalisation and modernity. The contemporary globalisation theorists have focused on denationalisation, deterritorialisation, and interconnectedness in all spheres of life. Globalisation promotes interconnectedness between different countries of the world. Such linkages have made physical borders less relevant because of the contemporary drift towards globalisation. The universalisation of the digital regime aided by globalisation has made the international connection a robust one for economic growth and

development. While such a digital footprint has facilitated immeasurable progress for market expansion, vis-à-vis it has also promoted the booming economy of an organised criminal enterprise beyond national territorial space (Enderwick, 2009). Globalisation aided the digital communication inflows, thus fuelling the circular economy of criminality (Zhang, 2007).

With the expansion of economic opportunities facilitated by globalisation forces, it is crucial to acknowledge the changing dynamics and the dark side of globalisation that fuelled transnational criminal activities. This has resulted in regional cum global threats that transcend national boundaries (Otor, 2017). As criminal organisations continue to expand through the enormous resources provided by globalisation, the opportunities are presented through information communication technologies that facilitate the networks of criminal syndicates around the world (Myers, 1995). The advancement in communication technologies that enables an effective transfer of information between cross-border criminal elements, which, of course, has reduced paperwork for planning and execution, provides an opportunity for flexibility in managing organisational structure that subdues the intelligence of state security forces (Folami and Naylor, 2017).

Importantly, the current wave of globalisation has undermined the prosecutorial capability of the states to deal with cross-border criminal activities. They have limited opportunities to combat transnational organised crimes, because of sovereignty that has to be respected by other neighbouring states (Ani, 2013). Several organised crimes are outside the jurisdictional domains of the International Criminal Court (ICC), allowing each nation to champion its course especially for enforcement, prosecution, and punishment of the offenders. The discrepancies embedded in diverse legal systems, opportunities provided by globalisation, and lack of cooperation among the neighbouring countries enabled the transnational organised criminal groups to flourish (Schloenhardt, 2005).

As the market expansion is flourishing, criminal networks are globalising. Thus, revolutionising the structural nature of the crime. Evidence from the literature suggests that criminal networks are expanding in the West Africa region, providing evidence of jihadist movement and ethnic militias that are threatening the stability of the region. Transnational related crime is increasing such as terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and all forms of illegal business characterised the contemporary security challenge facing the West Africa region (Folami and Naylor, 2017). The heinous activities and expansion of Al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, the Islamic State of West Africa Province, and several other militant cells have become a regional threat to West African nations (Onuoha and Ezirim, 2013). It is against this backdrop that Ksenija (2009) posits that modern theory about border should be redefined within the three constructive perspectives of 'bordering, re-bordering, and de-bordering' and contextualise the phenomenon of the border within the post-modern territory.

Since 2003, the globalisation trend of Boko Haram has been observed in a series of attacks. The current terror campaign in Nigeria, on the other hand, resumed in 2010, when the sect rebounded from its military setback in the July 2009 insurgency. Chad, Cameroon, and Niger were all included in this terror operation. Boko

Haram has also been linked to Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Al-Dine in Mali, Al Shabaab in Somalia, the Islamist Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), Séléka in the Central African Republic (CAR), and Al-Mua'qi'oon Biddam Brigade in Niger Republic in a number of terrorist campaigns across Africa. Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Ghana, and Senegal are among the countries where Boko Haram have recruited its fighters. Boko Haram's activities between 2009 and 2013 made the group the world's third most dangerous terrorist organisation, with 2.34% of total terrorist assaults and 5.9% of all fatalities from terrorist acts. Between 2009 and early 2017, Boko Haram's terror campaign is thought to have murdered around 28,000 people (Onuoha and Oyewole, 2018).

Transnationalisation of Boko Haram's operations has wreaked havoc on the Lake Chad region's humanitarian situation. There are an estimated 192,000 refugees in the Lake Chad Basin, 1.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria, and tens of thousands in Cameroon as a result of these issues. More than 150 schools have been closed in Cameroon's far north, while the education system in Nigeria's northeast has almost crumbled (Oyewole, 2016c). Boko Haram has carried out a series of attacks against schools and universities in northern Nigeria and Cameroon, with the goal of preventing students from enrolling in Western education rather than Islamic education in the region.

Many countries with interests in the Lake Chad area have turned their attention to Boko Haram. Boko Haram and its breakaway faction, Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladin Sudan (Defender of Islam in the Land of Black Africa), were designated as (foreign) terrorist organisations by Australia, the UK, Canada, the European Union (EU), Turkey, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and the USA in 2013, following the lead of the Nigerian government. A series of international dialogues have emerged, such as the 2014 Paris and London conferences on Nigeria's security situation (Oyewole, 2016c). In 2013, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)'s members approved a sub-regional counter-terrorism plan. Furthermore, efforts have been devoted to create sub-regional or regional counterterrorism forces and special funds to fight Boko Haram and other militant groups on the continent. The African Union (AU) also agreed to the deployment of 7500 regional soldiers to fight Boko Haram. This is because of the contemporary erosion of sustainability of border to accommodate the modern borderless space (Foyou et al., 2018).

Mapping the Hotspot of Transnational Kidnapping

The Gulf of Guinea

Both forced and preventive evacuations in the Gulf of Guinea and Niger Delta by pirates and militants respectively remain a testament to the height of terrorism devouring nations. The increase underscores the Gulf of Guinea's role as the major hub for maritime instability in Africa. The Gulf of Guinea's rising piracy and armed

robbery is largely due to the region's growing importance in global maritime trade, as well as capability and coordination deficiencies among several of the region's warships (Kamaldeen, 2015).

Two criteria would be granted to piracy hotspots and enclaves. First, from 2005 to 2012, piracy and robbery occurrences did not affect the entire region on a consistent basis. Second, even when occurrences are documented, the nature and trends of the episodes are not uniform. In the Gulf of Guinea, areas might be classified as 'hotspots', 'enclaves', or 'low-risk zones'. Piracy hotspots are categorised as primary or secondary, depending on the certainty of the presence of piratical organisations. Enclaves—locations where pirates are based and from where they operate—are categorised as primary or secondary, depending on the risk and hazard of assaults. There have been few recorded assaults off their coastlines, and trends on adjacent coasts are similarly limited—the hijacking of the tanker *Kerala* off Angola in February 2014 was the first big occurrence. Theft from ships at ports and anchorages, as well as rare thefts in territorial seas, occurs in and around the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sao Tome and Principe, and Senegal. Since 2009, attacks along the coastlines of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea have decreased significantly, removing these two countries from the high-risk category (Johnson, 2014).

The coastlines of Nigeria, Benin, and Togo are collectively the most perilous in the Gulf of Guinea. Nigeria stands out as the core of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, as well as the major pirate enclave. The country recorded 51.6% of incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Gulf of Guinea between 2000 and 2020 (Oyewole, 2023).

Nigeria is both a pirate hotspot and a secondary piracy enclave in the region. Since 2009, heavy weaponry, brutality, and ingenuity have marked attacks off its coast. In 2006, armed pirates attacked the Maltese-flagged *Constanza* 20 nautical miles off the coast of Guinea, causing major damage to the ship; in 2009 and 2010, the *Isola Verde* and *Songa Emerald* were successfully boarded while on the move, and, again, in 2012, armed pirates attacked the Maltese-flagged *Constanza* 20 nautical miles off the coast of Guinea, causing major damage to the ship (Oyewole, 2015, 2016b). The consistency and regularity of these attacks point to the presence of a pirate base in the region.

The seas off the coast of Nigeria are the focus of attacks in the Gulf of Guinea. Robbers typically target ships in port or at anchorage in the southwest of the nation, ransacking them before fleeing. Meanwhile, kidnappings of crew members are common in the seas near the oil-rich Niger Delta region to the southeast. Attackers frequently take captives onshore pending ransom payments, taking advantage of the Delta's extensive coastline and river networks. Instability in the Niger Delta is said to be linked to crime on land, where long-standing tensions over perceived marginalisation and environmental degradation have fostered insecurity (Oyewole, 2016b). In this context, the Nigerian government's provision of an amnesty and stipend for ex-Niger Delta militants in 2009 may have aided in the reduction of militant recruitment into piracy.

Piracy and armed robbery aboard ships cost the shipping sector a lot of money. The majority of these expenditures are connected to preventing armed attacks on ships (via state naval actions and/or privately contracted vessel protection), hazard compensation, and ship and cargo insurance costs. Countries surrounding the Gulf of Guinea face significant expenses, including some intangibles like offshore assaults that dissuade investment (Zenn, 2020). Piracy, armed robbery at sea, and oil theft are projected to cost Nigeria \$1.5 billion a month, according to a US diplomat at the United Nations in 2016. Many Gulf of Guinea nations rely significantly on port earnings and are consequently negatively impacted when shipping companies redirect boats due to instability. For example, during the 2011–2012 increase in the Gulf of Guinea petro-piracy, UNODC estimates that Benin may have lost up to 28% of its overall government revenue owing to a decrease in marine trade via its major port (Bell, 2022).

In 2018, at least six hijackings targeted oil tankers, compared to zero hijackings in 2017. The increase has sparked fears of a revival of ‘petro-piracy’, or the hijacking of tankers to steal oil. Tankers off the coast of Benin were routinely attacked in 2011, forcing Benin and Nigeria to undertake coordinated patrols to assist in stopping the hijackings. The majority of the 2018 tanker hijackings happened in the waters around Benin, highlighting the region’s problems in consolidating maritime security achievements. Oil boats in the Gulf of Guinea ‘are assaulted because there is a burgeoning illegal market for gasoline in West Africa’, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Petro-pirates in West Africa were previously discovered to have ties to the Niger Delta, where insurgents, politicians, security forces, and oil industry workers have all been linked to oil theft.

In the Gulf of Guinea, youth unemployment has been highlighted as a primary cause of piracy, a relationship that is emphasised when relating African youth unemployment to piracy in Nigeria. As a result of their unemployment and marginalisation, this group of people is more prone to turn to criminal activity, like piracy and oil theft, to make a livelihood (Oyewole, 2016c; Roggio, 2015). The Nigerian state, in particular, provides ideal conditions for young Nigerians to feel aggrieved and organise: seeing their government profit from the sale of oil while the majority of the population is excluded creates the perfect storm for conflicts and hostile behaviour, ultimately leading these youths to become militants and engage in piracy.

While the adherence of Nigerian youth to piracy as having a spillover effect in the wider Gulf of Guinea region is debatable, research from Somalia suggests that state-building alone is insufficient to combat the wider growth of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and that it must be combined with efforts to address youth unemployment, income inequality, and environmental degradation (Oyewole, 2016b; Zenn, 2020). State weakness is cited as the most popular justification for maritime pirate, despite differences about which level of governance this deficit is most relevant to piracy.

Kidnapping for ransom is a major motivating factor for the pirate groups. Kidnapping has suddenly become a lucrative business for Nigerian syndicates. This criminal practice, which began as a form of hostage-taking in the Niger Delta region of the country to draw the government’s attention to the region’s marginalisation,

appears to have evolved into a variant of armed robbery with a high level of expertise in illegally abducting people for ransom. The rise of this insecurity issue has perplexed a number of residents, businesspeople, international investors, law enforcement organisations, and government officials.

The consequences of piracy at the Gulf of Guinea have been dehumanising. People's livelihoods are being harmed by violence and relocation. People cannot produce, fish, or trade across borders due to insecurity around the coastal areas. Because of the instability, many farmers have not farmed their farms for 3 years; the river and lake that fishermen rely on have been declared off-limits by various governments as part of military operations. The piracy has forced the closure of some of Africa's most important markets, hampering cross-border commerce in livestock, dried fish, and agricultural items (Roggio, 2015; Oyewole, 2016d). The depreciation of the Nigerian naira as a consequence of lower global oil prices, along with a lack of agricultural produce as a result of the fighting, has caused food prices to more than double in Nigeria, with comparable threats presented to its neighbours.

The Lake Chad Region

Boko Haram (Jama'atul Ahl Sunnah Liddawati wal Jihad, JAS) and its sub-factions conducted heightened levels of violence connected to extremist organisations in the Lake Chad borderland area in 2020. According to the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), up to 40,000 people have been murdered in the Boko Haram war since 2009, 11.8 million people have been displaced, and around 230,000 people reside as refugees on the borderland. Humanitarian aid is needed by an estimated 7.1 million people (Zenn, 2020). Climate change, cross-border migration, the COVID-19 pandemic, illegal light weapon transfers, population shifts, chronic poverty, and weak governance have all worsened these conflicts. Extremists have benefitted from the adoption of Kanuri as a common language in their territorial expansion. The major language of the borderland is Kanuri, which is spoken in Nigeria's northeast, Niger's Diffa and Zinder provinces, and portions of Cameroon and Chad. Boko Haram and ISWAP leaders utilise the Kanuri language to communicate and indoctrinate their followers. They translate their messages into Kanuri in order to reach a larger audience. The dynamics of conflict in the Lake Chad borderland have shifted dramatically, with new players and online forms of propaganda, aided by foreign groups using sophisticated conflict strategies and digital technologies. These developments are taking place in a politically, economically, and socioculturally fragile borderland region (Onamuti et al., 2017).

Many Boko Haram members fled to neighbouring countries in reaction to Nigeria's military operation. The militants used this method to find chances in these nations for recruiting, training, camping, guns and ammunition purchase, and other supply and capacity-building activities. The militants benefit from a similar culture and language across the border, which is mainly permeable. Nigeria's borders were therefore closed and reopened on the condition that neighbouring nations take

efforts to tighten up security along common boundaries against militants. At the same time, Boko Haram's actions in each of these nations took on distinct proportions. In Chad and the Niger Republic, rebels have had few clashes with police, unlike in Cameroon, where the situation has become increasingly violent.

The Chad Basin region has a long history of heightened religious zeal as a key hotspot of terrorised abduction. Itinerant religious scholars travel the borderland, sometimes using extreme views to spread Islam. Boko Haram's leaders, who adhere to this school of thought, follow the Salafi-jihadi ideology, which holds that legitimate political power must be wielded in literal and absolute subordination to the Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunna (practices). ISWAP uses this story to reimagine Islam and restore its former greatness. ANSARU, on the other hand, has adopted the Salafi-jihadi doctrine and woven it into Usman Dan Fodio's idea of *tajdid* (reformation), pledging to defend Islam against Christian penetration in northern Nigeria (Aghemelo and Ibhasebhor, 2006; Albert, 2009). Dan Fodio was a Fulani religious instructor and revolutionary jihadist who lived in the Lake Chad borderland region in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Shekau and his supporters, on the other hand, are devoted to an extremist version of Salafi-jihadi philosophy that supports a pure Islamic environment. For example, in Uttu, Toto Local Council, Nasarawa State, forces from Operation Whirl Stroke apprehended around 410 members of the Darul Salam terror group in 2020. According to security reports, this organisation collaborates with the Shekau faction to recruit new members for Boko Haram's expansionist goal in northern Nigeria. Boko Haram reframes the history of the Lake Chad borderland as a battle between Islam and Western legacies, despite the fact that not all Muslims agree to this violent worldview.

This study establishes social media sites as Boko Haram hotspots. This is because Boko Haram uses the Internet domain for mobilisation and propaganda in order to carry out some of these crimes. Boko Haram previously utilised phoney SIM cards to make calls demanding money, claiming blame, threatening, or intimidating perceived opponents. Boko Haram and ISWAP are accused of releasing over 100 films on YouTube between 2010 and 2020, including beheadings, executions, and the stoning to death of people judged to be in breach of Sharia law. They also share photos of their soldiers carrying out assaults and/or in training, with many of them learning how to commit suicide (Albert and Danjibo, 2004). They have become less hierarchical, more networked, and related to members of the public as a result of their use of the digital environment. Currently, ANSARU posts passages from the Qur'an and general praise of Al-Qaeda leaders like Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri on Internet accounts like Telegram and Facebook. Boko Haram, on the other hand, praises Shekau and taunts ISWAP sympathisers on social media sites such as Telegram (an account with the name Khairul Huda appears to have been shut down), YouTube, and Facebook. ISWAP has accounts on Telegram, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Since November 2019, ISWAP has made a selection of its older movies available for the first time on Amazon, Google Play, Vimeo, Dropbox, Flickr, and other platforms. ISWAP's use of services including Twitter, Justpaste.it, Telegram, iMessage, and FaceTime is highlighted in a 34-page handbook on safeguarding communications created by IS and referenced in a study by the European

Foundation for South Asian Studies (Aina and Ojo, 2023; IRIN, 2002; Tarlebbaa and Baroni, 2010). Other communication apps that are regarded to have stronger end-to-end encryption, such as Signal and the German CryptoPhone and BlackPhone, have also been used by the gang. Because users could access them through Bluetooth, programs like FireChat, Tin Can, and the Serval Project were viewed as communication services, especially in the absence of the Internet. Mapps and Avast SecureLine were both recommended because of their ability to hide a user's location and IP address. ISWAP's communications approach looks to have improved because of this. For example, between December 2019 and August 2020, ISWAP released a video of eleven (11) Christians, humanitarian workers, and troops being beheaded in the Lake Chad borderland.

Reported Cases of Transnational Kidnapping by Boko Haram

Date	Incident	Remarks
19 February 2013	Kidnap of seven members of Tanguy Moulin-Fournier family in Dabanga, northern Cameroon	Freed on 18 April 2013 in Nigeria, reportedly in exchange for a \$3.15 million ransom and the release of 16 Boko Haram prisoners held in Cameroon
4 April 2014	Kidnap of two Italian priests and a Canadian nun from the small parish of Tchere, in north Cameroon	Cameroonian security forces swiftly blamed Boko Haram. Kidnapped persons released nearly 2 months later
17 May 2014	Boko Haram members killed a Cameroonian soldier and abducted 10 Chinese workers from the town of Waza, Cameroon	Ten vehicles belonging to the Chinese construction company were also taken in the attack
26 October 2020	Fulani armed militants kidnapped American Phillip Nathan Walton near Niger's border with Nigeria	Rescued by US military forces in Nigeria. No ransom was paid

Onuoha, 2014; Youssef, 2020

Concluding Remarks

For decades, the Lake Chad borderland region has been insecure, yet fundamental concerns including infrastructure, human development, and relative hardship have remained unaddressed. It is no secret that foreign groups like the Islamic State are increasingly helping ISWAP's strategy and propaganda operation. ISWAP, for example, has not only infiltrated terrorist organisations in northwest Nigeria, but it is also using social media to persuade clerics who are particularly critical of corruption and democracy to reject the Western notion of state and support Islamic authority instead. The ultimate objective might be to establish an operational nexus linking northeast-northwest Nigeria to the Lake Chad-Sahel confluence. At the regional level, no decisive steps have been taken to address how to particularly engage these foreign groups on the borderland. The PCVE program's Strategic Communications component has yet to get off the ground in Nigeria. Different approaches to

peacebuilding have been attempted by the Lake Chad border nations, with varying outcomes for communities. Most communities, on the other hand, are not contacted or involved in the process and are only required to participate halfway through. As a result, many communities are resistant to some of these techniques.

It is not clear yet how Nigeria will squirm itself out of the claws of kidnapping in what seems like a hopeless situation. The government over the years has failed to address the very root cause of kidnapping and in fact of crime in Nigeria but rather have bolstered the continuous perpetration of this evil. Although kidnapping is a different crime altogether, in the Nigerian context it has been adopted by jihadist extremists and pirates as a way of making quick money off the government and family members of victims. The government lacks the political will to tackle this menace and to bring it to a halt, but sadly the laxity of political leaders in the country has contributed immensely to the continuous perpetration of this heinous crime. There is no part of Nigeria that is free from kidnapping, but the intention behind the act is similar across ethnic and political settings across the country. The huge fund the government doles out to kidnappers has served as a catalyst for perpetrators to continue in the act. From ISWAP to Unknown Gunmen, to Herders, the government has provided the incentive for them to continue to kidnap while having a tremendous negative effect on the livelihood of Nigerians.

With regard to the Gulf of Guinea, as assaults extend southward from Guinea's secondary enclave, a pirate arc will emerge, reaching the Niger Delta's major enclave, posing a serious threat to maritime safety, offshore energy security, and regional stability. Regional nations and the international community must take effective corrective actions. While the Gulf of Guinea is dealing with a wave of piracy, the region is seeing the emergence of new transnational entities. Boko Haram, a Nigerian extremist Islamist group that was formerly restricted to the country's northern regions, has expanded its operations across Nigeria and neighbouring states.

The relationship between government and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is crucial. A lack of governance has far-reaching consequences that go beyond the current wave of piratical attacks. It also manifests itself in a variety of marine security issues, such as illicit, unregulated, and unreported fishing and illegal maritime migration. Ship hijackings in the Gulf of Guinea are carried out with impunity, sometimes deep inside ports, indicating a lack of enforcement, monitoring, and reaction capabilities. In the Gulf of Guinea, an insufficient legislative framework also jeopardises marine security. States in the Gulf of Guinea must establish and execute laws that encompass all aspects of piracy. The Gulf of Guinea is seeing an increase in maritime security cooperation; nevertheless, it is critical that projects be customised to the region's requirements.

Given the socio-economic conditions in the Gulf of Guinea, where several governments rank towards the bottom of the global development index, foreign collaborations should contribute significantly to capacity and capability development. Although international collaboration offers the promise of improving marine security in the Gulf of Guinea, a number of obstacles must be overcome, two of which need special attention. The first is the requirement for international cooperation and

coordination. Several cooperation efforts are now being developed in the region, and national authorities and regional institutions must respond and then execute them. They clog up national and regional policy, making it difficult to make and coordinate maritime security decisions. Instead, external players, donor agencies, and relevant international organisations should work with Gulf of Guinea countries in a coordinated and unified manner. Second, although marine security cooperation is undoubtedly a tool for non-regional governments to achieve broader strategic goals, some have offered no logistical assistance or financial allocations that correspond to the region's maritime security demands.

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Chapter 14

Kidnapping for Ransom (K4R) and the Challenges of Nigeria's International Image



Olusola Ogunnubi and Dare Leke Idowu

Abstract The global perception, reputation, and image of states are crucial determinants of how they are rated by major actors in the contemporary international system. States with a good global image are at a vantage position to shape the preferences of others and also attract foreign direct investment (FDI). Nigeria, which once wielded a good global image and hegemonic clout in Africa, is now tagged a failing regional power amidst widespread insecurities and other debilitating domestic struggles. Although there are enormous studies on the implications of insecurities and specifically the menace of kidnapping for ransom (K4R) in Nigeria, the extant literature on K4R is yet to interrogate the recurring trend of K4R for Nigeria's international image. This chapter is the first scholarly attempt to unpack the effects of K4R for Nigeria's international image and perceived hegemonic interest in Africa. The authors submit that the instability caused by the recurrence of K4R clearly undermines Nigeria's domestic record and questions its international profile on the continent. Apart from undermining Nigeria's purported regional power claim, governmental failures and state apathy in addressing the root causes of K4R provide the leeway for other more stable regional powers to challenge Nigeria's presumed hegemonic status in Africa.

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Introduction

The global image and reputation of states are crucial determinants of how they are perceived and rated by other states and non-state actors in the contemporary international system (Wang, 2006). The global perception of a country also constitutes a major yardstick for measuring its standing in the contemporary international system (Aleyomi, 2020). States with a good reputation for promoting democratic norms and those that rank high on the global indexes such as the Global Democracy Index, Global Peace Index, the Human Freedom Index, Press Freedom Index, the Corruption Perception Index, the Global Terrorism Index, and others are better placed for favourable global advantage. Apart from being at a vantage position to shape the preferences of others, such states stand better chances of endearing their ideologies, foreign policy actions, and policies to foreign publics, thereby attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and potentially improving their tourism and industrial sectors. For instance, by correlating the country image of Bosnia and Yugoslavia with the volume of FDI inflow to these countries at the end of 2011, Eminovic (2013) argues that there is a positive relationship between the image of a country and its propensity to attract the inflow of FDI.

The poor global image of Africa as a continent laden with images of poverty, war, disease, civil unrest, and unending social problems makes it an unfavourable destination for FDI (Annan, 1999). Another study argues that improvement in the demeaning global imaging of Africa is requisite for the attraction of more FDI to the continent (Dupasquier and Osakwe, 2006). Arguably, if a negative image does discredit countries as a favourable destination for FDI, a positive global image of countries with a good reputation can also improve their economic fortunes and impact positively on how the nationals of such states are perceived or treated abroad (Routley, 2019).

States with a bad reputation for human rights violation, repression of democratic norms, endemic political corruption, and widespread violence and insecurities might struggle in their quest to achieve their strategic interest in the contemporary global system. For instance, hinged on Nigeria's worrisome reputation for gross human rights abuses and pervasive political corruption that has corroded the capacity of the Nigerian Army, the Obama administration halted the sale of sophisticated weapons and attack helicopter to Nigeria (Ogunnubi et al., 2016; Cooper and Searcey, 2016). Other reasons alluded to were the sale of arms and ammunitions to Boko-Haram by officers of the Nigerian army and the possession of America's sensitive ammunition supplied to Nigeria but captured by the insurgents (Voice of America, 2016). In addition, foreign investors and especially tourists are more likely to avoid countries with a poor global reputation and perceived security risks (Munshi, 2019).

Deducing from the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical premises for assessing the regional hegemonic credentials of a country, Nigeria is arguably a regional power in Africa (Ogunnubi and Oyewole, 2020; Ojajorotu and Adeleke, 2017; Ogunnubi and Okeke-Uzodike, 2016). Nigeria boasts of enormous soft power

resources and indisputable economic might, military capabilities, human population, and other hard power resources for which it is posited as the presumed 'giant of Africa' and an enviable continental power. In terms of its leadership credentials, Nigeria's relentless commitment to Afro-centric foreign policy, investment in human capital development of other African countries through Nigeria's Technical Aid Corps Scheme (TACS), and massive investment in Peace Keeping Mission and peaceful resolution of conflict in Africa validate its acclaimed regional hegemonic power status (Ogunnubi and Oyewole, 2020; Ojatorotu and Adeleke, 2017; Ogunnubi and Okeke-Uzodike, 2016; Ogunnubi, 2016). However, Nigeria's regional hegemonic status is continually contested not only by the ascendancy of other potent regional powers like South Africa but most especially based on increased poor global imaging and declining global perception of its citizens abroad (Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016; Tella, 2017). Other notable domestic constraints are its records for gross 'human rights violations, high levels of inequality, environmental pollution, and insecurity' (Tella, 2021, p. 6).

Regrettably, Nigeria has been tagged a failing regional power because its acclaimed regional hegemonic status and previous leadership credentials on the continent are besieged with the plagues of contradictory domestic struggles that impact negatively on its external image and ultimately challenge the perception of its hegemonic standing in Africa (Ogunnubi et al., 2016). Although Nigeria has been hypothesized as having the largest economy in Africa since the rebasing of its economy in 2013, it is surprisingly ranked as a country with highest record of extreme poverty level, a worrisome rate of inflation, unemployment, and human development (World Poverty Clock, 2021; Kazeem, 2018). Despite championing the fight for the decolonization of African states and promoting peace and freedom through peacekeeping mission and human capital interventions such as the TACS, Nigeria currently ranks as one of the most insecure states in Africa. Nigeria, the former pivot of peaceful resolution of conflict in Africa, is staggering arduously to curtail the rascality of Fulani herders and forestall the wanton killings, kidnapping, and abductions orchestrated by Boko-Haram for over a decade (Idowu and Agbalajobi, 2022; Amao, 2020; Ojatorotu and Adeleke, 2017; United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d). This difficulty is worsened by the government's inability to contain the surge of kidnapping and, specifically, kidnapping for ransom (K4R) by bandits and unknown gunmen (Idowu & Oladiran, 2023). All of these and other unsavoury realities that have impacted negatively on the international image of the purported 'giant of Africa' call to question Nigeria's regional power standing on the continent.

We argue in this chapter that the crippled domestic condition of Nigeria in the face of worsening insecurities has led to a concomitant nosedive of the country's external image thus questioning the viability of Nigeria's regional power credentials in Africa. We draw from the Biblical passage admonishing that 'If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small' (Proverbs 24:10) (King James Bible Online, 2021) to pose the question: should the seemingly helpless state of Nigeria amidst the rising incidences of intractable insecurities and especially K4R be construed as weakness or a lack of material resources to combat the menace?

The extant literature on violent insecurities in Nigeria has focused on the interrogation of the causes, patterns, and implications of the Niger-Delta crisis (Osagie et al., 2010), Boko-Haram insurgency (Maiangwa, 2014; Onapajo and Uzodike, 2012), the rascality of marauding Fulani herdsman for Nigeria's socio-economic development, and national and human security (Idowu and Agbalajobi, 2022; Akpan, 2010; Akinola, 2011). There is, however, a paucity of studies that theorize how violent insecurities impact Nigeria's international image and regional hegemonic standing. Apart from Munshi's (2019) work that established that the abduction depicts Nigeria as a high-risk country for business, scholarship on K4R is yet to integrate the international relations context that explains the lethal implications of K4R for Nigeria's international image and the assertion of its regional power status. Furthermore, the budding body of knowledge on violent extremism and insecurity in Nigeria is yet to completely unravel the implications of kidnapping for Nigeria's ailing domestic economy and specifically its tourism industry. For this reason, this chapter draws inferences from data obtained from secondary sources to interrogate the implication of the proliferation of K4R for Nigeria's international image and the assertion of its regional power status. The study also examines what this incessant trend of kidnapping implies for Nigeria's tourism industry.

Kidnapping in Nigeria: What We Know and What Is Missing

Kidnapping is an age-long societal ill perpetrated by armed groups for different reasons across the world. Kidnapping is the 'unlawful removal of someone and confines him or her in isolation, and a situation of false imprisonment, to restrain the victim unlawfully, usually accomplished by the threat of force that coerces him to stay where he is directed' (Greenawalt, 1989, p. 92). Section 364 of Nigeria's Criminal Code describes kidnapping as what happens when a person is unlawfully imprisoned and transported to a place that '...prevent any person entitled to have access to him from discovering the place where he is imprisoned' (Criminal Code Act, 2004). Although the contemporary surge in kidnapping in Nigeria is traceable to the 1980s when kidnapped victims were used for money rituals, the history of kidnapping in Nigeria dates back to the nineteenth-century slavery era that featured the invasions, abduction, and kidnapping of locals across West Africa (Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Ikime, 2006).

In its current epoch, kidnapping in Nigeria is multi-causal and multi-dimensional in nature. Different variants of kidnapping are perpetrated by perpetrators who waylay their victims for different purposes and intents. For this reason, kidnapping in Nigeria has different subtypes. These range from kidnapping for ransom (K4R), kidnapping for vengeance, kidnapping for rituals, kidnapping for sexual exploitation, kidnapping for recruitment into terrorism network, politically motivated kidnapping, business-oriented kidnapping, and kidnapping for the liberation struggle (Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Oyewole, 2016a; Osumah and Aghedo, 2011).

Of these subtypes of kidnapping, K4R or economic kidnapping which originated from the abduction of expatriate oil workers in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta on 28 June 1999 is the most pervasive in the contemporary phase of kidnapping in Nigeria. Economic kidnapping or K4R in this context is defined as a form of kidnapping that is motivated by economic reasons which could only be gratified by demanding ransom from victims, their relatives, leaders, organizations, or the government as in the case of mass kidnapping.

K4R has been described as a booming enterprise and a thriving business (Iyorah, 2021; McLaughlin, 2021). It is a multi-million Naira venture that thrives despite the multiplicities of security agencies in Nigeria. The illicit venture of K4R in Nigeria is so lucrative that notorious kidnappers like Chukwudi Dumeé Onuamadike (fondly called Evans), Amisu Bala, and many others became multi-millionaires through ransom received from victims, human trafficking, and the sale of human body parts.

The origin of K4R in Nigeria is linked to the hijacking of the Royal Dutch Shell Company's foreign helicopter by the 'Enough is Enough' armed liberation group in 1999 (BBC News, 1999). From that time, activism-based kidnapping and K4R or kidnapping for economic reasons became perennial in Nigeria. In the same year, the Control Risk Group ranked Nigeria 8th of 10 countries identified as kidnapping hotspot (Briggs, 2001). As of 2013, 22% of all recorded kidnapping globally occurred in Africa, and 'Nigeria accounts for 51% of all incidents on the continent' (Oyewole, 2016b, p. 1).

This unsavoury ranking holds weight when juxtaposed with the surge in activism-based kidnapping perpetrated by aggrieved Niger Delta youths. Since 1999, aggrieved Niger Delta youths incentivized by the powerful elites formed different militia groups to protest the decades of political marginalization of the oil-rich Niger Delta, environmental degradation from oil spillage, and the economic deprivation of the Niger Delta people. This is despite being the storehouse of the crude oil that accounts for Nigeria's major export and over 86% of its foreign earnings since the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantity (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, 2021). Militia groups such as the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVR), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and other armed groups embarked on full-blown kidnapping of expatriates working for multinational companies in exchange for ransom (Chinwokwu and Michael, 2019; Odoemene, 2014; Akpan, 2010).

Leveraging on the establishment of an advanced kidnapping network and strategy, these militia groups recorded a remarkable increase in the frequency and incidences of ransom kidnappings in the Niger Delta (Odoemene, 2014). Some of the notable cases of kidnapping by the militia groups in the Niger Delta region include the kidnap of two Britons and three other foreign oil workers in Port Harcourt in 2006 (Beresford and Agencies, 2006). Another set of four British oil workers were kidnapped in Eket town in Akwa Ibom State in October 2006. The kidnappers demanded a ransom of £21 M (Pallister, 2006). In 2007, nine Korean pipeline workers kidnapped in Rivers State were freed after their employer negotiated ransom with the kidnappers (Harris, 2007). Another set of eight Filipinos and three Koreans were also kidnapped by ransom seeking kidnappers in River State in 2007 (Gulf

News, 2007). In 2010, three Britons and a Columbian were kidnapped in Port Harcourt (Reuters Staff, 2010). Dickinson (2011) alludes that at least 70 expatriates kidnapped between January to September 2011 were released unharmed after the receipt of ransom (Dickinson, 2011). In 2013, kidnappers of six foreigners kidnapped in Bayelsa demanded a ransom of \$1.3 million to secure their release (The Nation, 2013).

Building on the trend and model of K4R in the Niger Delta, unknown gunmen and other sects of kidnappers have targeted notable public figures, wealthy men, politicians and their relatives, and members of the upper and middle stratum of the Nigerian society. High-profile cases of K4R perpetrated by unknown gunmen in Nigeria include the kidnapping of Professor James Adichie, the father of the renowned Chimamanda Adichie for which his family paid an undisclosed amount as ransom to secure his release in 2015 (Iyora, 2021). Kidnappers of Prof. Olayinka Adegbehingbe of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, received N5.045m as ransom before he was released from their captivity (Ojoye, 2019). In 2020, kidnappers of the sister of the Deputy Majority Leader of the Oyo State House of Assembly demanded N20 million Naira ransom to secure her release (Agboluaje, 2020). More recently, in 2021, kidnappers placed a price tag of over \$13,000 as ransom to secure the release of the niece of Pauline Tale, Nigerian Minister of Women Affairs (Voice of America News, 2021).

The menace of K4R is so pervasive in Nigeria that apart from the Niger Delta militants, Boko-Haram insurgents, bandits, and multiplicities of gunmen in North East and Western Nigeria have become renowned perpetrators. The major victims of these armed groups are women, schoolchildren (girls and boys), and traditional and religious leaders. In 2014, Boko-Haram kidnapped 276 high school girls (mostly Christians) from the government secondary school in Chibok, Borno State. Some of these girls have allegedly been returned upon payment of two million euros as ransom by the Nigerian government, while others escaped for safety with another 100 of them still missing (Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021). Similarly, the Nigerian government was reported to have paid 5 million euros as ransom to secure the release of 106 out of the 110 students kidnapped from Government Girls' Science and Technical College, Yobe State, by the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) in 2018, a faction of Boko-haram insurgents (Oyewole and Onuoha, 2021; Obia, 2018; Bakare, 2018). In Kaduna State, abductors of the 39 students of the Federal College of Forestry Mechanization in Kaduna State kidnapped by yet to be identified gunmen demanded 500 million Naira while abductors of 23 students and staff of Greenfield University equally demanded 800 million Naira as ransom (Muhammad, 2021; Wuyo, 2021). Abductors of the Greenfield University students also released one of the abductees named Aaron Attahiru after his parents paid an undisclosed amount as ransom (Olasupo, 2021).

As earlier argued, most of the existing studies on kidnapping in Nigeria focused on problematizing the menace of kidnapping in terms of its evolution (Odoemene, 2014), causes, and trends (Okolie-Osemene and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Akpan, 2010; Aghedo, 2015). Oyewole (2016a, b) equally interrogated the lived experiences of kidnapped victims and governmental policy responses towards securing

the release of hostages. Scholarship on kidnapping and K4R in Nigeria has yet to interrogate, from the standpoint of international relations, the nexus and implications of kidnapping and specifically K4R for Nigeria and its acclaimed hegemonic standing on the continent. Therefore, this study extends the debate on kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria by interrogating its implications for Nigeria's international image, its regional power status, and economy and tourism industry. This international dimension of the research on kidnapping in Nigeria is significant for many reasons. First, it is by understanding the wider geopolitical implications of insecurity caused by kidnapping and other similar challenges that the government can begin to take seriously the necessity to develop a formidable security architecture that addresses these challenges. Secondly, by underscoring the challenges of K4R for Nigeria's global image, it is possible to provide empirical based research that will assist the government in nipping the menace in the bud.

Perceptions and Image Theory in International Relations

The study of perception and the image of countries in the international system arose from the defects of the theories that explain the occurrence of war and the termination of peace solely from the standpoints of material factors and power estimates (Herrmann, 2013). Perception is a central concept that explains the decisions and behaviours of major stakeholders in the international system. Perception includes 'the individual attitudes of state actors (decision-makers) not only towards other states but also their own country' (Mišík, 2013: 445). The major rationale for scholarly inquiry on how perception shapes the relationship among states is ingrained in the logic that 'it is often impossible to explain crucial decisions and policies without reference to the decision makers' beliefs about the world and their images of others' (Jervis, 1976, p. 28). The perceptions and beliefs that state actors hold are pivotal to the extent that they inform what is described as reality. This is because 'reality is only real to the degree we perceive it' (Mišík, 2013: 446) and the perception that state actors hold about a state often translates into the image they form about other countries, their state actors, and the interpretations they attach to the actions, inactions, and reactions of such actors in the international system.

Image in this study is defined as the 'patterns or configurations of the coherent beliefs about the character, intentions, motives, and emotions attributed to or associated with the out-group as a whole' (Alexander et al., 2005, p. 782). One of the earliest and groundbreaking theorizations of image as the model for analysing the relationships among states is traceable to the works of Boulding published in 1956 and 1959. In his book titled *Image*, Boulding (1956) underscored the central role of image as the major determinant of the policy, decision, and actions of states in the international system. He argued that image is so central in the international system that decision-makers in the contemporary international system place credence on how they perceive a situation as against the facts of the situation (Boulding, 1959: 120–121). In essence, the major decision-makers in the international system act by

following the way the world appears to them rather than the way it is in reality (Boulding, 1959).

Whether real or false, it is the image and perception of reality that determines the behaviour of those who wield the authority to formulate policies, make decisions, and resort to course of actions that affect other states in the international system. Hence, the image or perception that states actors hold about other states, sometimes against the truth or evident reality, determines their decision, policy responses, and disposition towards other states (Boulding, 1959). It is often the image, not the truth that immediately determines behaviour. This is because 'we act according to the way the world appears to us, not necessarily according to the way it is' (Boulding, 1959: 120). Thus, apart from the image a state holds of itself, the most important images in international relations are those that other states, non-state actors, and foreign publics hold about a state regardless of the true situation (Boulding, 1959).

Based on psychological disposition, the global image, perception, and reputation of a state are central in determining the perception, behaviour, policy decisions, actions, reactions, and inaction of other states, non-state actors, and foreign publics. In addition, Wang (2006) identified the image of states as an important factor in how they are perceived, rated, and accepted by other states in the international systems. Buhmann (2016) avers that the external image of a country and the perception held by foreign publics impact on its exports and prospects of attracting FDI, the steadiness of its foreign relations, the global appeal of its educational system and domestic labour markets, and the global economic and political significance of such countries in the contemporary international system. Furthermore, Herrmann (2013) opines that the citizens of countries in the international system identify and determine the threats and opportunities available to their country by drawing inferences from the images, pictures, or perception they have about other countries. This corroborates Boulding's (1959) assertion that the perception of a state as a threat or opportunity is rooted in the image that other states and foreign publics hold about such a state. In addition, apart from the abundant possession of hard power resources (Götz, 2020), the international image or reputation of a state are soft power resources that account for the global ranking and status of such a state. Thus, considering that the global image and status of countries have significant impacts on their external relations especially on political, economic, and security matters, smart countries have continued to engage in nation branding, image, perception, and reputation management practices.

Contrary to what is obtainable in the past, globalization and the surge of digital information and communication technology, satellite images, social media application, and the Internet are fast engendering the transnational exposure of gross violation of human rights, endemic political corruption, and other undemocratic practices of political leaders especially in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa in general. The implication of this being that the perception that state actors, foreign publics, and international organization form about repressive states translates into the international image of such a state. Arguably, the decision of state actors in relation to repressive states will be premised on the international image accruable from how such a state is perceived. Considering that the course of action that decision-makers

embark upon is always the derivative of the images they have developed about other states, policy choices of these decision-makers will be hinged on the image they developed about domestic and international activities of the states they interact within the international system.

Furthermore, apart from the global media such as the BBC, CNN, and Aljazeera among others, the Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Transparency International, and other human rights institutions with transnational reach have helped to expose the undemocratic practices in countries across the world. The recurrent broadcast and regular reportage of these global media and transitional human rights institutions and scholarly publications contributed to the poor global imaging, rankings, and status of states with the worrisome level of human rights violation, police brutality, insecurity, and violence among others. Thus, having explicated the pivotal position of image and perception as exemplified in this section of the study, this chapter proceeds to use these inferences to examine how K4R has impacted Nigeria's international image and the implication of this for Abuja's regional power status.

Nigeria's Battered Image and the Curse of Kidnapping

Nigeria prides itself as the 'giant of Africa' and 'the largest economy in Africa' (Naidoo, 2020; Ogunnubi, 2016; Mabry and Maier, 2000). This is possible because of the volume of its hard power and the enormous but seldomly harnessed soft power resources. Scholars have also historicized Nigeria as a big brother state with enviable hegemonic credentials and influence on the continent. These studies rely on the astute continental leadership that Nigeria exemplified in expediting the decolonization of states in Africa, promoting African unity, preventing violent conflicts, and promoting peacebuilding. Another major factor is the contribution of Nigeria to the human capital development of states in Africa through the TACS (Ogunnubi, 2016; Adebaw, 2013). Arguably, these remarkable leadership roles exemplified by Nigeria constitute a major boost to its national image and regional standing on the continent.

Regrettably, previous epochs of military dictatorship and associated violation of human rights, appalling economic situation, endemic political corruption, state failure, political ineptitude, widespread insecurities, the menace of out-of-school children, governance deficits, drug trafficking, and the surge of Internet scams among Nigerian youths have abetted the battering of Nigeria's national and global image. For instance, in terms of economic performance, Nigeria's rating as the poverty capital of the world and a country with extreme economic inequality levels as well as worrisome level of unemployment calls to question its purported status as the economic giant of Africa (Oxfam International, 2022; World Poverty Clock, 2021; Kazeem, 2018). Despite the existence of anti-corruption agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), and the Code of Conduct

Bureau, the pervasive level of political corruption and the further regressions in the annual ranking of the Global Corruption Perception Index challenge the leadership credentials of Nigeria as the purported African hegemon.

Nigeria's worrisome record of gross human rights violation and police brutality and impunity (Human Rights Watch, 2020; NOI Polls, 2020) undermines its regional status and global standing. The humanitarian crisis accruable from the state failures that have given leeway to the recurrence of widespread attacks on farming communities by marauding herdsmen as well as the killings, bombing, abduction, and kidnapping perpetrated by the Boko-Haram insurgents for over a decade demeans Nigeria's reputation in the league of nations. On the aspect of international financial crimes, the theatrical arrest and arraignment of 77 Nigerians of 80 cybercriminals in the \$46 m Internet scam in 2019, US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) 'fraud busts dent Nigeria's global reputation' and impact negatively on how the world is viewing the government and peoples of the country in the aftermath (Hundeyin, 2019). Additionally, the arrest and arraignment of Nigeria's Ramoni Igbalode popularly known as Hushpuppi and his gang members for Internet fraud amounting to 1.6 billion dirhams (\$435,611,200) further drag Nigeria's global image in the mud (News Agency of Nigeria, 2020). Unarguably, Nigeria's current economic, political, and security predicaments, worrisome corruption perception index, and the demeaning arrest and indictment of Nigerians for Internet scams and frauds have indeed dented the status, image, and global perception of the purported 'giant of Africa' and its nationals. These repugnant trends have also reduced Nigeria to the position of ridicule and scorn in the globe, for which Aleyomi (2020) argued that the country is in a worrisome state of image problem.

Regrettably, the pandemic of kidnapping and ransoming in Nigeria and state's failure in containing the menace is adding yet another dimension to the already poor global imaging of Nigeria. The rising incidences of K4R, especially the targeted kidnapping of school students and the worrisome humanitarian crisis it has occasioned, call to question all that Nigeria stands for on the continent. Consequently, what follows this section is a discussion on how K4R undermines Nigeria's international image and regional power standing in Africa.

A Regional Hegemon in Decline: Implications of K4R on Nigeria's International Image

Despite the existence of the multiplicities of securities agencies and the possession of hard power resources, the Nigerian state continues to witness a worrisome surge in the incidence of kidnapping. K4R has become perennial in that it has been construed as a lucrative and booming enterprise, a growing industry. For instance, kidnappers have collected at least \$18.34 million as ransom between June 2011 and the latter part of March 2020 (SB Morgen, 2020). What is even more alarming is that

the kidnappers collected almost \$11 million of the \$18.34 million paid as ransom between 2016 and 2020 (Morgen, 2020).

Arguably, this depicts a scenario where the menace of K4R is becoming a lucrative venture in Nigeria and evidence of the state's failure to secure its citizens. Also, beyond the increasing trend of K4R and the steady rise in the amount of money paid as ransom, K4R is not without fatalities in Nigeria. A total of 1331 fatalities have been linked to the top 10 kidnapping cases in Nigeria between 2011 and 2020 (SB Morgen, 2020). Sometimes, victims were killed even after collecting as much as N106.3 M ransom from their families (This Day, 2020).

In more recent kidnapping cases involving students of the Greenfield University kidnapped on 20 April 2021, the kidnappers killed three of the kidnapped victims on the 23rd of the same month and two more killed 3 days after. Considering the increasing transnational diffusion of these demeaning events through the instrumentality of the Internet and social media application, the global audience is armed with ample information, images, and videos of gross violation of human rights and man's inhumanity to man. Without doubt, this impacts negatively on the impression that other states, the foreign public, investors, and other international organization will form about Nigeria, Nigerians at home, and those in the diaspora.

Apart from kidnapping persons belonging to the middle class and high-income strata, the kidnapping of school children in Northern Nigeria renowned for the high incidence of out-of-school children is indeed globally condemnable. Boko-Haram kidnapped 276 Chibok schoolgirls and 59 Yobe schoolboys in 2014. Another set of 100 Dapchi schoolgirls were kidnapped by the sect in 2018 apart from a series of undocumented low-profile kidnapping in villages across Northern Nigeria. Tertiary institution students have also been forcefully taken from the Greenfield University, Kaduna, the Federal College of Forestry Mechanization in Kaduna State, and the Federal University of Agriculture in Makurdi, Benue State. In all, over 800 students and staffs have been kidnapped in at least six kidnapping incidents across Northern Nigeria since 2020 and many (BBC News, 2021). Worrisomely, many of the students and school staffs have also been killed in the process.

Furthermore, state apathy and governmental failures in preventing the attacks on schools and ensuring prompt delivery of abducted students before they were killed also hold negative implications for Nigeria's external image. The point here is that governmental failures to prevent the forceful kidnapping of Nigerians and dilatory responses towards ensuring prompt release of the victims provide the opportunity for critical minds and foreign publics to perceive Nigeria as a country that places little or no value on the lives of its citizenry. This assertion is validated by the reactions of parents on governmental failures and state apathy in securing the abducted Greenfield University students and staff which forced them to negotiate privately with the abductors. In an interview by the Channels Television after the release of the abducted students and staff of Greenfield University, one of the affected parents lamented that:

the summary of it is that these 40 days has been 40 days of trauma, 40 days of trouble, 40 days of confusion, 40 days of disappointment. That for forty days the future of Nigeria, the children of Nigeria were kidnapped and no government both Federal and State none of

them could lift a finger. We made appeals as parents, we have addressed press conference on several occasions calling for help, no government signified interest, no government showed intention to help and so these children were left on their own and that the parents have to rally round to make sure that these children were released. Everything the kidnappers asked for were given by the parents without the help of any body, without the help of any government.

I cannot mention the amount here but it is a huge amount of money. We paid money and just yesterday, they collected a number of bikes which we have to because our future, our children, our blood and destiny were tied down for 40 days... There was no fight anywhere by any security agency. I stand to be corrected let any security agency come out and come and tell us where they fought the kidnappers. The parent, all of us we have suffered, we have sold all our properties, everything that is value to us we sold to rescue our children. There is no government, there is no security agency that came out for any assistance or any help (Channels Television, 2021).

Arguably, the claim of apathy towards the state by its inability to secure the release of the kidnapped Greenfield students and staff, and the government's inaction that forced the parents to negotiate directly with the abductors, leading them to sell off their valuables to pay 180 million and 10 motorcycles as ransom (The Guardian, 2021), embodies the failure of the Nigerian state and its security agencies to live up to their constitutional responsibilities of protecting human lives especially those of its citizens. Without doubt, this discredits Nigeria as a country that places little credence on human lives. Citing this state failure and inability to secure the lives of its citizens, Nigeria was labelled a 'fully failed state of critical geopolitical concern' (Campbell and Rotberg, 2021; Rotberg and Campbell, 2021).

Furthermore, apart from having to sell their properties and obtaining loans to pay huge amount of money as ransom, the transnational viewership of the torture, physical assault, and sexual harassment, molestation, and brutalization of the kidnapped victims occasioned by YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp among others imprints a negative image of Nigeria in the minds of foreign audiences. Regrettably, the negative image resulting from the portrayal of Nigeria in a bad light impacts significantly on the decision-making process by other states and the global audience especially on decisions that revolve around investment, diplomatic relations, and tourist advisory.

As established in the introductory section of the study, Nigeria is a regional hegemon in Africa, judging from the conceptual and theoretical premises for benchmarking a regional power. Despite this, Nigeria's current image predicament and especially the lethal effects of K4R challenge Nigeria's hegemonic credentials on the continent. The failure of Nigeria to protect its citizens and prevent human rights violations of kidnapped victims calls to question Nigeria's tendency to challenge the menace of insecurity and human rights violation endemic on the continent. Furthermore, state failure in addressing the immediate domestic economic factors responsible for K4R discredits Nigeria's purported claim as the giant of Africa and the largest economy in Africa. What is the value of Nigeria's economic status if it is rated as the poverty capital of the world, a country with extreme economic inequality levels, and a skyrocketing record of unemployment? (Oxfam International, 2022; World Poverty Clock, 2021; Kazeem, 2018). This ultimately detracts from Nigeria's

regional power profile and its capacity to play a decisive hegemonic role not only in the Lake Chad region but in West Africa and the continent at large.

Apart from discrediting Nigeria's purported claim as a regional power in Africa, state apathy and governmental failures in addressing the immediate domestic economic causes of K4R provide the basis for South Africa and other viable regional powers to challenge Nigeria's hegemonic status on the continent. Apart from reinforcing the negative perception and image of Nigeria, the leadership failure of the Nigerian state to prevent K4R questions Nigeria's big brother status and moral ground for addressing the insecurity challenges confronting the continent. Going by the saying 'Charity begins at home', Nigeria should rather focus on addressing the domestic crisis bedevilling the home front before exerting an already questionable leadership role in assisting other states to fight insecurities on the continent. This is because Nigeria that once served as a haven for the nationals of ECOWAS Member States displaced by violent conflicts now experiences the displacement of its citizens some of whom have become refugees driven out as a result of K4R or other security challenges. The enormous challenges that the K4R pose to Nigeria's international image, foreign policy capabilities, and the assertion of its regional power status impact negatively on Nigeria's ability to advance its geostrategic interest on the continent.

Implications of K4R on Nigeria's Economy and Tourism Industry

Although widespread insecurities occasioned by the Niger Delta militias and the Boko-Haram insurgents have led to a negative global profiling of Nigeria, the worrisome trend of K4R amidst state failure is only furthering the negative and demeaning profile of Nigeria globally. The increasing negative profiling of Nigeria occasioned by the recurrence of K4R has intensified the transnational placement of travel restrictions and advisory against several Nigerian cities. This will significantly reduce Nigeria's propensity to attract FDI and tourist visits.

Consequent upon the menace of widespread insecurity occasioned by rampant kidnapping cases in Nigeria, on 22 May 2021, the Government of Canada (2021) announced a travel advisory against 'non-essential travels to Nigeria due to the unpredictable security situation throughout the country and the significant risk of terrorism, crime, inter-communal clashes, armed attacks, and kidnappings. Canadians are strongly advised to avoid travels to 18 of the 36 states of the federation (Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Bauchi, Borno, Delta, Gombe, Imo, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Rivers, Sokoto, Plateau, Yobe, and Zamfara), which are the high-risk zones for kidnapping and other forms of violent crimes or conflicts that raised security concerns in Nigeria.

Citing terrorism, kidnapping for ransom, and other types of violent crimes and conflicts, the US Department of State-Bureau of Consular Affairs (2021) announced

a 'do not travel' advisory against visit to 12 of the 36 states of the federation, including Akwa Ibom, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Borno, Cross River, Delta, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Rivers, and Zamfara State. The Bureau noted that K4R has become a frequent occurrence across the identified states, and kidnappers often target 'dual national citizens who have returned to Nigeria for a visit, as well as U.S. citizens with perceived wealth'. It also warns that kidnappers have taken to the practice of abducting persons travelling on interstate roads (The U. S. Department of State-Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2021).

The UK government also announced travel advisory on states of Nigerian federation that were considered to be the major hotspot of kidnapping and other violent crimes or conflicts recently. Specifically, on 19 May 2021, the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) strongly advised against all travels to major hotspots, such as Adamawa, Borno, Yobe, Gombe, Kaduna, Katsina, and Zamfara in the North and the riverine areas of Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, and Cross River States in the South. The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) also advises against all forms of travel except essential travels to other hotspots, such as Abia, Bauchi, Kano, Jigawa, Niger, Sokoto, Kogi, non-coastal part of Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers State and within 20 km of the land border between Niger and Kebbi State (FCDO, 2021). The FCDO's travel advisory against Nigeria is based on the perception that:

There's a high threat of kidnap throughout Nigeria. Kidnaps can be motivated by criminality or terrorism, and could be carried out for ideological, financial or political gain. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the risk of kidnap increases after dark. The security environment in the North East has deteriorated since 2018 and there is a heightened risk of kidnap. Kidnaps in the North East have included humanitarian and private sector workers. There are also reports that Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) are continuing to actively plan to kidnap foreigners. As well as in North-East Nigeria, extremist groups operate in some northern and middle belt states including Bauchi, Gombe, Kano, Kogi, Kaduna, Niger and Adamawa States. If you're working or travelling in these States then you should be aware of the risk of terrorist kidnapping (FCDO, 2021).

It is evident from the above that the travel advisory placed against many Nigerian states for widespread kidnapping and other violent crimes or conflicts is an indicator of a dent in the global image and reputation of Nigeria. Beyond this, the poor global image and perception of Nigeria by the USA, the UK, Canada, and foreign investors and the travel advisory against Nigeria could dwindle the inflow of FDI and discourage foreign investment, international trade, and tourists' visitation. The aftermath of this is the underutilization of Nigeria's economic and tourism potentials. This in turn will impact negatively on Nigeria's economic growth and exacerbate the rate of unemployment and poverty in the country. The ultimate consequences of this are that economic stagnation caused by insecurity linked to K4R will in turn nosedive Nigeria's capacity to play stronger roles on the global scene.

Contrariwise, although the menace of K4R could reduce FDI inflow into Nigeria from Europe and North American states renowned for promoting human rights and civil liberties, this may not pose severe threat to Nigeria's economic growth. Rather, this will create a vacuum of opportunities for major and emerging powers, including

Russia and China and other countries with worrisome records for political repression and gross human rights violation, to increase their economic engagement with Nigeria. This assertion is premised on the increasing volume of the Sino-Nigerian economic relations in the aspect of trading, and China's increasing interest in the Nigeria's extractive sector, which is hypothesized to increase FDI inflow and employment opportunities.

Conclusion

The global image, reputation, and perception of states are fundamental elements and yardstick that determines their appraisal by a variety of actors in the international system. In this chapter, the authors have interrogated the menace of K4R in Nigeria from the standpoint of the implications it holds for Nigeria's external image and hegemonic standing on the continent. The authors also examined how Nigeria's poor image implicates its economy and tourism industry. By drawing inferences from the perception and image theory of international relations, the study argues that the menace of K4R undermines Nigeria's international image. The authors further argue that the transnational placement of travel restrictions and advisory against international travels to Nigeria ridicules Nigeria's regional ambitions and global image.

The authors argue that the demeaning global image and perception of Nigeria occasioned by the menace of K4R discourages FDI inflow to Nigeria, regresses international trade, and inhibits tourist attraction to Nigeria. The impact is clear in Nigeria's struggling economy, which has exacerbated a worrisome level of poverty and unemployment in the country and impeded Nigeria's capacity to play a major role in the international scene. The authors argued further that Nigeria's image predicament occasioned by K4R undermines its hegemonic credentials and leadership aspirations on the continent. This undermines Nigeria's clout and capability for advancing its geostrategic interest on the continent.

The study argues that the negative profiling of the purported 'giant of Africa' by major global players like the USA, the UK, and others and especially the placement of travel ban could reduce economic relations and dwindle the inflow of FDI to Nigeria. On the contrary, the study alludes that Nigeria's worrisome records for political repression and gross human rights violation, insecurities, and most especially the menace of K4R could only reduce trade relations and FDI inflow into Nigeria from Europe and North American states. We argue that this may not pose significant threat to Nigeria's economy because the reduced presence of Europe and North America in Nigeria creates what we call 'a vacuum of opportunities' for Russia and China and other countries with a worrisome human rights record to increase their economic engagement with Nigeria.

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Chapter 15

State Responses to the Menace of Kidnapping in Nigeria



Gbeke Adenuga

Abstract Kidnapping has become one of the main security threats in the Nigerian state and hardly does a day go by without report of missing person across the length and breadth of the country. With the fast-rising rate of ransom-induced kidnapping cases, Nigeria has overtaken global hotspots such as Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, the Philippines, Venezuela, Ecuador, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan to attain the unenviable status of the capital of kidnapping for ransom in the world. While this development may signify the loss of capacity by the state to effectively discharge its constitutional duty of protecting lives and property, literature on kidnapping in Nigeria tends to gloss over the responses of the state to the phenomenon and their challenges. This chapter, which employed descriptive analysis of data derived from secondary sources, examined the legal, political and military dimensions of state's responses to the menace. With the rational choice, the deterrent, the relative deprivation and the conspiracy theories as its guide, the chapter found out that the lack of will to effectively arrest and prosecute kidnappers, politics of resource control and complicit on the part of the political, religious and military leadership in the country act as limiting factors on state's responses. *Inter alia*, the chapter recommended the removal of security from the exclusive legislative list to the concurrent list to accommodate the creation of state police forces to allow for better measures to protect the population against the menace of kidnapping in Nigeria.

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Introduction

While there are divergent opinions in the thoughts of social contract theorists including Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau on the nature of the state, a central theme in their writings indicates that the state was created to ensure the security and welfare of the people. Indeed, security of lives and property and the promotion of the welfare of citizens are the *raison d'être* of every government. Nigeria is not an exception in this regard as the 1999 constitution, in Section 14, Subsection 2 (b), avows that 'the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government' (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

Despite the constitutional affirmation of the stated duties of the Nigerian state, insecurity is rife across the length and breadth of the country. Hardly does a day go by in Nigeria without alarming reports of threats to lives and property with the government seemingly hapless to deal with these security threats. This development has made scholars to describe the Nigerian state as either a 'failing' or a 'failed' state, given her gradual but steady decline into the Hobbesian state of nature (Bach, 2004; Campbell, 2010; Ebeh, 2015; Kalu et al., 2018; Okoli and Agada, 2014; Osaghae, 2020). This description of Nigeria is not farfetched, considering the fact that a state's survival is hinged on its ability to adequately respond to security threats. As Alumona et al. (2019: 2) put it 'the ability of a state to ensure adequate security has become a principal variable in measuring the success or failure of the state. Thus, state failure is associated with countries that have lost control over the instruments of security maintenance'.

Prominent among the security threats facing Nigeria is the menace of kidnapping. It is instructive to note that while kidnapping in the country has a long history stretching as far back as the precolonial period, it became a burning national problem in the 1990s and it continues to escalate in intensity and scope since the commencement of the Nigerian Fourth Republic in 1999. Nigeria has consistently been listed as one of the ten countries with the highest reported cases of kidnappings (Egbegi et al., 2019; Odoemene, 2014; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Ottuh and Aitufe, 2014).

Various forms of kidnapping have been identified including kidnapping for rituals, kidnapping to achieve political ends, and kidnapping for exploitation which can be sexual or for ransom (Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Ottuh and Aitufe, 2014; Oyewole, 2016; Stubbert et al., 2015). It is pertinent to note that the lines that differentiate these forms of kidnappings may seem blurry, especially between politically motivated kidnappings and kidnapping for ransom, as some insurgent groups often combine the two forms in order to embarrass the government and at the same time gain funds to procure arms and finance their activities. The reality, however, is that kidnapping, especially with financial gains as the motive, is fast becoming one of the main, if not the main, threats to security in Nigeria. With the fast rising rate of ransom-induced kidnapping cases, Nigeria has overtaken the likes of Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, The Philippines, Venezuela, Ecuador, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan to attain the unenviable status of the capital of kidnapping for ransom in

the world (Egbegi et al., 2019; Odoemene, 2014; Okoli and Agada, 2014; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019). The rising incidences and increasing scope of kidnappings in Nigeria might well be indications of the loss of capacity by the Nigerian state to adequately respond to security threats.

The chapter has six sections with the first section serving as the introduction to the chapter. The second section gives the theories on which the discourse in the chapter is premised. These theories include rational choice, deterrent, relative deprivation, and conspiracy theories. The third section examines reported cases of kidnappings between February 2018 and December 2020. It shows the rate and spread of kidnappings across the six geopolitical zones of the country, and it also examines the main factors responsible for kidnappings in these geopolitical zones. The fourth section places the beam of research on state responses to the menace of kidnappings in the country. The fifth section examines the challenges of state responses to kidnapping cases. The sixth section makes recommendations towards the strengthening of state's capacity to adequately combat the challenge of kidnapping in the country.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The discourse in this chapter is guided by a combination of theories including rational choice, deterrent, relative deprivation, and conspiracy theories. The rational choice theory has a long history dating back to the seminal works of Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham on the nature of criminals and crime prevention in the eighteenth century (Lyman and Potter, 2007; McCarthy and Chaudhary, 2014). This theory, after about a century of irrelevance, witnessed a resurgence in the twentieth century with Gary Becker's economist model of expected utility in 1968 (McCarthy and Chaudhary, 2014; Ogu, 2013). The rational choice theory sees men as rational actors who take decisions based on the considerations of the costs and benefits of such decisions (Okoye et al., 2016; Ogu, 2013; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019). In criminology, criminals are also assumed to be rational individuals who consider the costs (risks) involved in taking part in an illegal activity and the benefits accruable from such an activity before deciding to either commit the crime or refrain from committing it (Lyman and Potter, 2007; McCarthy and Chaudhary, 2014; Okoye et al., 2016; Pratt, 2008). If the costs outweigh the benefits, the likelihood is high that a rational mind would rather refrain from committing a crime, but if the benefits outweigh the costs, the tendency is that the individual would have more inclinations towards such a criminal action.

Another main strand of the rational choice theory is the notion of time and achievements which McCarthy and Chaudhary (2014) refer to as the 'orientation to time'. Men tend to resort to criminal activities if the expected benefits from such activities would far outweigh benefits to be derived from legal activities within the same timeframe and employing same resources. However, if the expected benefits from the criminal activities are marginal compared to legal activities, the tendency to engage in criminal activities greatly reduces.

Kidnapping is basically an activity premised on rational choice as the kidnapper(s) consider(s) the questions of why, who, where, when, and how before engaging in it (Tade et al., 2019). It is not an activity performed by chance as it requires proper planning, i.e. the reasons for kidnapping (religious, sexual, psychological, political, or ransom), who to kidnap, the most appropriate place and time to kidnap the intended victims, the method to employ in kidnapping the victims, and the likely benefits and consequences of the act. As posited by Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene (2019: 242), there are six stages to kidnappings including ‘target selection, planning, deployment, attack, escape, and exploitation...the group must identify a victim; plan for the abduction, captivity, and negotiation; conduct the abduction and secure the hostage; successfully leverage the life of the victim for financial or political gain; and then escape’. The theory is apposite to this discourse because kidnapping flourishes in a society where the risk of being apprehended is low and where the benefits are high. In this regard, kidnapping is rampant in Nigeria because the state capacity to apprehend and bring kidnappers to book is low while benefits, based on the need, are immense. In the same vein, the security architecture of the Nigerian state seems inadequate to combat crimes, with criminal acts such as kidnapping becoming mega-million businesses and turning criminals into elites. A reference case is that of Chukwudumeme Onwuamadike (Evans) who was reputed to have built a multi-million-naira kidnap-for-ransom business before his arrest in 2017.

The deterrence theory is a corollary of the rational choice theory. The main premise of the deterrence theory is located in the belief that the fear of apprehension and punishment serves as a major deterrent to intending criminals (Lyman and Potter, 2007; McCarthy and Chaudhary, 2014). Where the certainty of apprehension is present and where punishments are swift and severe, the tendency to engage in criminal activities becomes greatly minimised. Man, by nature, prefers pleasure to pain and he avoids any activity that is guaranteed to promote pain over pleasure and vice versa. Colombia, for decades, was regarded as the kidnapping capital of the world with about 3527 cases of kidnappings recorded in 2000 alone (Stubbert et al., 2015). However, starting from 2000, a major crackdown on kidnappers by the Colombian government, with the active support of the USA, has led to the arrests and imprisonment of key kidnapping barons, which have resulted in drastic reduction in kidnapping cases in Columbia (Stubbert et al., 2015).

In Nigeria, there is no appropriate deterrence mechanism for kidnappings which informed the upsurge in kidnapping cases in recent years. The ability to carry out kidnapping operations without much opposition from security forces, the uncertainty of capture, and the immense wealth accruable from engaging in kidnapping, especially for ransom-induced ones, have made it the profession of choice for criminally minded Nigerians. The case of Evans mentioned in the discussion of the rational choice theory also indicates that the legal and judicial institutions in Nigeria seem to encourage criminality as the case has not been concluded since his arrest on 6 October 2017. The various cases of plea bargaining on corruption issues and inconclusive judicial matters on apprehended criminals may well be factors promoting criminality in the country.

The relative deprivation theory posits that deprivations, whether real or perceived, are motivations for individuals and groups to tend towards the exhibition of deviant, and by extension, criminal behaviours (Adedire et al., 2016; Agboti and Nnam, 2015; Brown, 2014; Samuel, 2019). Samuel (2019: 5478) succinctly captures the essence of the theory by noting that:

Human beings have come to agree on acquisition of some virtues, values and properties around their social and physical environments as indispensable for living. Such are sometimes considered as their entitlement for living or being part of the environment. Relative deprivation is the experience of being deprived of something to which one feels to be entitled. It refers to the discontentment people feel when they compare their positions and achievements with those around them and realize that they have less of that which they believe to be entitled. Relative deprivation is often preceded by the perception of unfair treatment in the distribution of resources by the mainstream society.

Agboti and Nnam (2015: 159) further opine that the feelings of being deprived make people 'develop a sense of injustice and discontent' leading to criminal inclinations. The relative deprivation theory aptly portrays the state Nigeria's Niger Delta region. The oil-rich region could be described as the 'goose laying the golden egg' for the Nigerian state as the economy is mainly founded on the exportation of oil from the region. However, the region seems to be the most underdeveloped in the country. Decades of uncontrolled oil exploration in the region leading to pollution of the land and water resources of the region without adequate compensations by the oil companies and the Nigerian government was a major causal factor of militancy of which kidnappings of expatriates, especially the personnel of the oil companies, were regarded as tactics to draw global attention to the plights of the people of the region; to force the Nigerian government to pay developmental attention to the region; and to ensure a steady source of funds for the struggle to emancipate the people of the region (Ibrahim and Mukhtar, 2017; Samuel, 2019). In the same vein, security agents may become lethargic in the discharge of their constitutionally assigned duties if they feel deprived of their financial, material, and psychological needs.

This discourse is also founded on the conspiracy theory. Van Prooijen and van Vugt (2018: p. 1) describe the theory as 'the conviction that a group of actors meets in secret agreement with the purpose of attaining some malevolent goals'. Douglas et al. (2017) also view it as the general perceptions and convictions that important events are the consequences of the secret plots of powerful and malevolent people. Given reports that some Nigerian leaders connive and collude with criminal elements to kidnap people in order to achieve some political and economic goals, the Nigerian state can be viewed as a collaborator in the kidnapping business.

Analysis of the Spread of Kidnappings in Nigeria (2018–2020)

Table 15.1 gives the analysis of kidnapping incidents as adapted from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) in 2021. It is, however, pertinent to point out that kidnapping incidents are underreported in the country,

Table 15.1 Incidences of kidnappings between February 2018 and December 2020

Zone	States	Kidnapping incidents			Total
		2018	2019	2020	
South-South	Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers	20	22	41	83
South-East	Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo	2	9	21	32
South-West	Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo	8	5	22	35
North-East	Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe	29	26	86	141
North-West	Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara	13	44	153	210
North-Central	Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, FCT Abuja	13	24	84	121
Total		85	130	407	622

Source: Adapted from ACLED 2021

especially in Southern Nigeria as the families and associates of victims tend to negotiate directly with kidnappers, either because of the perceived inefficiency of Nigeria's security agencies or to prevent harm to the victims or for both reasons (Assanvo and Okereke, 2019).

South-South Nigeria

South-South Nigeria is made up of seven states comprising Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers states. With the exception of Ondo State (which falls in the South-West zone) and Imo State (located in the South-East), South-South Nigeria roughly makes up the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. As earlier mentioned, the discovery of oil in exportable quantities in the Niger Delta region was the harbinger of economic prosperity for Nigeria. Diametrically, oil exploration became the curse of the Niger Delta as the pollution caused by such explorations was left unchecked for decades ruining fishing and farming, the main occupations in the Niger Delta, and thereby impoverishing the people of the region.

With the unhidden fact that revenue generated from the region was being used to develop other regions of the Nigerian state while the Niger Delta remained undeveloped, at various times since independence, individuals and groups tried using various means, including nonviolent and violent means, to call the attention of successive Nigerian governments to the plights of the people in the region with little or no success. The main state's response to such agitations was to unleash its security agencies to deal with such individuals and groups. Such cases included the 1966 Isaac Boro-led uprising which was quashed through the arrest, prosecution, and imprisonment of the leaders of the uprising, the 1995 executions of nine leaders of the Ogoni people including a globally recognised author and playwright, Ken Saro Wiwa, who as the leader of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People

(MOSOP) employed nonviolent means to criticise governments' policies in the Niger Delta, and the 1999 massacre of the inhabitants of Odi town in Bayelsa State as a retaliatory measure for the killings of 12 policemen allegedly by militants near the town.

By the early 2000s, many militant groups including the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Niger Delta Liberation Front (NDLF), the Niger Delta Freedom Fighters (NDFF), Niger Delta Militants (NDM), the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV), and the Coalition for Military Action (COMA) had sprang up in the Niger Delta with the main objective of forcing the Nigerian state to recognise and deal with the deprivation of the region (Odoemene, 2014; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Oyewole, 2018). One of the main strategies of these groups was the kidnappings of expatriates and high-ranking workers in the multi-national oil companies in the region. These kidnappings were to serve two ends—bring global attention to the cause of the groups and to generate funds from ransom paid to continue the struggle against the Nigerian state (Odoemene, 2014; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019). To address and redress the grievances of the people of the region, the Yar'Adua administration came up with an amnesty programme in 2009 which was geared towards the human and physical development of the Niger-Delta.

While the introduction of the amnesty programme reduced the incidences of kidnappings in the region, kidnapping cases were still being recorded. Four factors might account for the continued cases of kidnappings in the zone. Firstly, as Oyewole (2018) notes, the ethnic groups in the Niger Delta and, by extension, the South-South include the Bini, Efik, Ibibio, Ijaw, Ikwerre, Isoko, Itsekiri, Ndoki, Ogbia, Ogoni, and Urhobo. The Ijaw were at the forefront of the struggle against the Nigerian state prior to the commencement of the amnesty programme, and it seemed to be the most favoured of the ethnic groups in the amnesty deal. The argument is that cases of militancy, including kidnappings, by groups in the region after the commencement of the 2009 amnesty programme are basically ploys by ethnic militias in the region to either remain relevant to the amnesty programme or to be included in the programme. The Liberation Movement of the Urhobo People (LIMUP) is a reference case. The group's leader, Kelvin Oniarah, also known as Kelvin Ibruvwe, was a kidnapper who terrorised not only the South-South but also the South-East, the South-West, and North-Central zones of the country. His eventual arrest in 2013 was consequent to his televised threat to unleash mayhem on the South-South if his group was not adequately recognised in the amnesty deal (Amaize, 2013; Oyewole, 2018).

Secondly, the huge revenues derived from kidnappings in the pre-amnesty programme era bred a generation of criminally minded elements in the region who consider kidnappings a source of livelihood. Thirdly, political motives also played a major role in the continued cases of kidnappings in the region as witnessed in politically motivated abductions in the periods before, during, and after the 2019 general elections. Fourthly, Fulani herdsmen in the region have also been alleged of engaging in kidnappings in the region.

South-East Nigeria

Kidnappings for ransom gradually spread from South-South Nigeria to the South-East zone where it became a booming business, what Osumah and Aghedo (2011) describe as the ‘commodification of kidnapping’, with many kidnapping lords building kidnapping-for-ransom empires which extended into other geopolitical zones of the country. Some of these kidnapping kingpins included Chukwudumeme Onwuamadike who worked under the alias of ‘Evans’, Chukwudi Solomon (King Solomon), Henry Chibueze (Vampire), Dominic Nwakpa (Alhaji), Obiona Nwakwo (Osisikankwu), and Kelvin Oniarah (Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019). It is instructive to note that Osisikanku and Vampire were killed in 2010 and 2017, respectively, in gunfights between their gangs and Nigeria’s security forces (Okoli, 2010, 2017). Before Alhaji’s arrest in 2017, his gang had been responsible for high-profile kidnappings in the South-East, the South-West, and North-West zones of the country (Onyeji, 2017a). Most notable among these kidnapping lords, however, were Kelvin and Evans. Before Kelvin’s arrest in 2013, he had built a kidnapping empire across the South-South, South-East, and South-West zone of the country (Amaize, 2013). In the same vein, Evans, who was arrested in 2017, had been the mastermind of many high-profile kidnapping cases in the country and had established a multi-million-naira kidnapping-for-ransom empire.

It should be noted that the prosecution of Kelvin and Evans, which began in 2013 and 2017, respectively, has not been concluded to date, despite the overwhelming evidence against them, and this inability to successfully prosecute arrested kidnappers might account for the continued incidences of kidnappings. Politically motivated kidnappings and abductions by suspected marauding Fulani herdsmen were also witnessed in the period.

South-West Nigeria

While there were reported incidences of kidnappings in South-West Nigeria before the early 2000s, these incidences were far in between and were mainly connected to ritual purposes (Oyewole, 2016). However, the incursions of kidnapping-for-ransom lords from the South-South and South-East into the big cities of the South-West, especially Lagos, turned the zone into another stronghold of kidnappings in the country. People were also abducted in the region to achieve political objectives before, during, and after the 2019 general elections and marauding Fulani herdsmen also accounted for the kidnappings of some people in the period.

North-East Nigeria

The death of Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of the Jamaat Ahl as-Sunnah lid Da'wah wal-Jihad, better known as Boko Haram, in police detention in 2009 led to the radicalisation of the group, and it became a major threat to lives and property in Nigeria, especially the Northeastern part of the country as shown in Table 15.1. Reports have it that the activities of the group, with that of the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), a splinter group of Boko Haram, have led to the deaths of tens of thousands of Nigerians and the destruction of properties worth billions of naira. The groups have also been responsible for the kidnappings of thousands of Nigerians (Amao, 2020; Cold-Ravnkilde and Plambech, 2015; Falode, 2016; Onuoha, 2014).

At this juncture, it is pertinent to point out a major difference between kidnappings for ransom in Southern and Northern Nigeria. Kidnappers in Southern Nigeria tend to target individuals who have the capacity or who are related to people who have the capacity to pay the ransom demanded by the kidnappers. In Northern Nigeria however, kidnappers target soft institutions of governments including schools, hospitals, and government officials in a bid to make the government pay ransom and to make it lose face.

Aside from the kidnappings associated with the Boko Haram and ISWAP, the zone also plays host to many communal militias and bandit groups which loot, maim, and kill in the communities in the zone. These communal militias, bandit groups, and other unidentified armed individuals/groups have also been responsible for the kidnappings of thousands of people in the region.

North-West Nigeria

Table 15.1 shows that the Northwestern part of the country is the most beleaguered geopolitical zone in the country in terms of kidnapping incidences. The number of kidnapping cases in the zone in 2020 alone outstripped the total number of kidnappings in the three geopolitical zones in Southern Nigeria between 2018 and 2020. Incidences of kidnappings in the zone are also more significant in terms of numbers than in the other two geopolitical zones in Northern Nigeria. Communal militias, which often engage in acts of banditry, are mostly responsible for kidnappings in the zone. The zone has also become the main theatre of operations for kidnapping syndicates which often abduct government officials and students at different levels of education in order to pressurise the state governments to pay ransom.

North-Central Nigeria

Communal militias, bandit groups, and unidentified kidnapping syndicates are largely responsible for the high rate of kidnappings in the zone.

State Responses to Kidnappings in Nigeria

While global and local media are always awash with reports of kidnappings in the country, government's responses to incidences of kidnappings have not enjoyed media attention. The prevailing notion tends to suggest that the Nigerian government is hapless and stumped by the challenge kidnappings pose to the country. This section thus takes a look at state responses to kidnappings in Nigeria.

Legal Response

In the Nigerian criminal law, kidnapping is described as 'the taking away or transportation of a person against that person's will, usually to hold the person in false imprisonment, a confinement without legal authority' (Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019: 235; Ottuh and Aitufe, 2014: 422). From this description, unequivocally, kidnapping is a crime in Nigeria as it involves the use of coercive powers by individuals who lack the legal authority to wield them. To take away or transport a person against his/her will is an indication that force or the threat of force, which is the sole prerogative of the state, was applied. Confining an individual in false imprisonment is an infringement on his/her constitutional rights of movement as guaranteed by Section 41 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Kidnapping also violates the rights of Nigerians to respect the dignity of their persons and personal liberty as enshrined in Sections 34 and 35 of the constitution, respectively. With these considerations, Section 364 of Nigeria's Criminal Code labels kidnapping a felony and provides a penalty of 10 years for convicted kidnappers (Egbegi et al., 2019; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019).

Following the rising incidence of kidnappings in Nigeria, many states including Rivers, Ebonyi, Lagos, Delta, and Enugu decided to adopt the death penalty as the punishment for convicted kidnappers, especially those who kill their victims, while stiff penalties were also introduced for their collaborators (Akhilomen, 2020; Busari, 2017; Goitom, 2009). Lagos state's criminal law provides a case study. Section 269 (a) of the 2011 Criminal Law of the state provided a punishment of twenty-one (21) years imprisonment for kidnapping-for-ransom offences. However, the rising cases of kidnapping in the state forced the state's legislature to review its stand of punishments for kidnappings culminating in the 2017 Kidnapping (Prohibition) Law of Lagos State which provides capital punishment for cases where death occurs as a result of kidnapping. The Law also provides a twenty (20) year imprisonment jail term for persons convicted of the offence of conspiring to kidnap residents of the state, while twenty-five (25) years imprisonment was provided for kidnapping cases where deaths of victims do not occur. Not to be outdone in this regard, the Nigerian Senate, in September 2017, also approved the death sentence for kidnapping cases where the deaths of victims occur and a thirty (30) year imprisonment for kidnappings without death occurrences (Busari, 2017).

It is instructive to note that a major deficiency in these laws is the distinction being made between kidnapping cases with and without the deaths of victims. As Akingbehin (2017) notes, hardly do criminal laws make distinctions between types and levels of armed robbery. Armed robbery in Nigeria attracts capital punishment irrespective of the fates of victims as the possession of arms by the robbers indicates the intent to injure or kill. The same should apply to kidnappings as every act of kidnapping is accompanied by a significant display of force, including the display of various arms and ammunition, to make the victim(s) obey the instructions of the kidnapper(s) (Odoemene, 2014). Based on the premises of the rational and deterrence theories, differentiating between types and levels of kidnappings in criminal law gives the intending kidnapper the choice of picking the type or level that provides the least punishment. As Odoemene (2014) and Ottuh and Aitufe (2014) posit, criminally minded Nigerians tend to see kidnapping as a better alternative to armed robbery as it affords greater benefits with lesser risks in terms of apprehension and punishments.

The Military Response

As shown earlier, in the South-South zone, the Nigerian government had heavily favoured the usage of the military option to deal with militancy and its associated activities including kidnappings. Premised on the mounting difficulties in oil exploration as the bombings of oil installations and the abductions of the staff of oil companies in the zone were the main pursuits of the militants coupled with global media attention to the plight of the people of the zone, the Yar'Adua administration in 2009 switched to the usage of the amnesty programme to address the feelings of deprivations in the zone. However, the Federal Government still maintains a military presence in the region in the form of a Joint Military Task Force (JMTF) which is charged with dealing with recalcitrant militants and every form of criminality associated with militancy. While it is to the credit of the JMTF that some kidnappers hiding under the guise of militancy in the zone were either arrested, such as Kelvin Oniarah, or killed, such as Ossy Ibori (Oyadongha and Johnson, 2017), kidnappings still remain a challenge in the zone.

The deployment of special military forces to monitor security hotspots in the country is also a major response of the Nigerian state. These deployments are often reactive measures to stem rising incidences of criminalities including kidnappings in the country. Since 2016, the Nigerian army has been conducting periodic special operations to stem the tide of kidnappings and other forms of criminalities in the various geopolitical zones in the country. These operations include Operations Crocodile Smile, Operations Python Dance, and Operations Dance for Peace which targeted security hotspots in the South-South, South-East, and South-West zones (Erunke, 2019; Najakku, 2016; Olugbode, 2020; Onyeji, 2017b; Willie, 2019). For the North-West and North-Central zones, the Nigerian military has been conducting special operations including Operations Haradin Daji, Harbin Kunama, Sahel

Sanity, and Sharan Daji to ensure the protection of lives and properties, especially from marauding communal militias, bandits, and kidnapping groups. For the North-East, a Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) comprising security forces from the Lake Chad Basin States including Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria patrols the zone to check the menace of Boko Haram, ISWAP, and communal militias (Amao, 2020; Akhaine, 2019; Burutai, 2019; Omonobi, 2020; Onyeuko, 2020; Yerima, 2021).

Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) shows that in 2020 alone, the Nigerian Military comprising the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy went on about 45 operations to combat bandits, terrorists, and pirates across the country with over a thousand kidnapped Nigerians rescued. In one operation to flush Boko Haram terrorists from their strongholds in Konduga Local Government Area in Bornu State on 3 January 2020, 461 kidnapped victims were rescued. In another operation on 9 May 2020, the military battled Boko Haram terrorists and dislodged them from Muktu in Ngala Local Government Area. They were able to release 72 Nigerians who had been held in captivity by the terrorists in the town. In a raid of bandit groups' camps in Anka Local Government Area in Zamfara State on 16 March 2020, the military were also able to rescue 22 kidnapped victims.

The military also collaborated with the police force about three times in 2020 to rescue kidnapped victims. On 24 April 2020, the Nigerian Air Force and the Nigeria Police Force stormed the hideout of a communal militia group in Zurmi forest, Zamfara State, and rescued scores of kidnapped Nigerians. On 25 November 2020, the Nigeria Military and Police Force also rescued a Nigerian from a kidnapping group operating around Alogani, Nasarawa-Eggon Local Government Area in Nasarawa State. On 30 December 2020, the military and police force also combated a communal group in Lambo Village, Kurfi Local Government Area, Katsina, and rescued 23 kidnapped victims.

There were also collaborations between the Nigerian Military and local vigilante forces in the rescue of kidnapped victims. On 19 December 2020, the military, with the assistance of local vigilante forces, dispersed a bandit group operating at Mahuta in Dandume Local Government Area, Katsina State, and rescued 84 Nigerians who had been abducted by the bandits. The Nigerian Military with local vigilante forces also collaborated with Cameroon Armed Forces on 20 January 2020 to combat Boko Haram terrorists in many villages located in Bama Local Government, Bornu State. The collaborative Forces were also able to rescue many Nigerians abducted and held captive by the terrorists.

The Nigeria Police Force

The Nigeria Police Force's initial response to kidnappings in the country tilted towards the compositions of search and rescue missions to locate and rescue kidnapped victims. With the acknowledgement that kidnappings were spiralling out of control, the police force began the process of forming special squads and intelligence-driven tactical units to investigate and arrest notorious kidnappers in Nigeria. In

2019, the Nigeria Police Force launched a counter-kidnapping operation code-named 'Operation Puff Adder' which aimed at proactively checking the menace of kidnappings in the country and restoring the confidence of Nigerians in its ability to adequately maintain law and order. Operation Puff Adder has led to the arrest of hundreds of kidnappers including the notorious Hamisu Bala Wadume and Yunusa Yusuf Inusa, two kidnap-for-ransom kingpins who terrorised and oversaw the kidnappings of many Nigerians in the North-West, North-East, and North-Central zones of the country (Odama, 2021; Ogundipe, 2019; Shaban, 2019).

Aside from the collaborations between it and the military which resulted into the rescue of scores of Nigerians from the camps of kidnappers, the Nigerian police also carried out many operations to rescue kidnapped victims. For example, on 18 July 2020, the Nigerian police responded to a distress call from Kwantawama in Dutsin ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, over the attempted abductions of 14 women by a bandit group. One of the bandits was arrested and the women rescued.

State Governments

Security in Nigeria is located on the Exclusive Legislative List, which by implication means that only the Federal Government is empowered to give security agencies in the country binding orders on security issues. However, states' governments respond to kidnappings and other crimes in their states by procuring arms and ammunitions and other logistics including vehicles to aid security agents in preventing crimes and in bringing criminals to book (Osumah and Aghedo, 2011). While the Federal Government and many State Governments also talk big and bold about using the agencies of the state to arrest kidnappers and rescue kidnapped victims, it has become the norm for these governments to negotiate payment of ransom, sometimes running into millions of dollars, to secure the release of the victims (Musawa, 2021; Onubogu, 2021; Parkinson and Akingbule, 2021).

Another initiative of state governments is to float security outfits such as those existing in the South-West geopolitical zone. The governors of the six states that comprise the zone, alarmed by the rising incidences of criminal activities, especially that of kidnappings in the zone, decided to work on establishing a regional security outfit to tackle the menace. These governors in January 2020 launched a regional security outfit code-named 'Amotekun' to collaborate with existing security agencies to stem the tide of criminalities in the zone (Feyisipo, 2020).

Challenges of State Responses to Kidnappings in Nigeria

From the data on kidnappings in Nigeria, it is obvious that state responses to kidnapping incidences are inadequate. Northern Nigeria is practically under the siege of terrorism from groups including the Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP). Bandit groups exist in almost all the states in Northern

Nigeria, and these groups roam, loot, kill, and kidnap at will (Okoli and Ugwu, 2019). In Southern Nigeria, reports of kidnappings by unidentified individuals and groups have also become the new normal. This section is therefore devoted to the challenges limiting Nigerian governments from adequately responding to cases of kidnappings in the country.

The Nigeria Police Force, the main body constitutionally vested with the maintenance of law and order within the Nigerian state, is grossly underpaid, understaffed, poorly motivated, and ill-equipped to discharge its responsibilities satisfactorily (Otu and Elechi, 2018; Uzoezie, 2020). In the same vein, the Nigerian military is underfunded, underequipped, and ill trained to combat terrorism and banditry which, more than any other factors, account for the high rate of kidnappings in Nigeria, especially in Northern Nigeria (Munshi, 2018; Onuoha et al., 2020).

Revelations of corruption, mismanagement, and embezzlement of the funds meant for the war against criminalities in Nigeria are also grave challenges to the capabilities of the security agencies to curtail, reduce, and remove the vice of kidnappings from the Nigerian state. On the assumption of office after its victory in the 2015 polls, the Buhari-led administration accused the Jonathan-led administration, its predecessor, of funnelling billions of dollars from the fund meant to procure weapons for the military into private pockets and hinged the failure of the Jonathan administration in its war against terrorism and its associated ills on the corrupt nature of the administration (Faul and Adigun, 2015; Kazeem, 2015). The Buhari administration has not fared better than its predecessor in this regard as billions of naira approved by the government to equip Nigerian security agencies were also allegedly stolen (Ayitogo, 2021). The culture of mismanagement, misappropriation, and embezzlement of security funds would continue to thwart the efforts to overcome Nigeria's security challenges including kidnappings. The relative deprivation theory, which posits that people develop feelings of injustice and discontent, may have been responsible for the seemingly inability of the Nigerian security forces to effectively combat the growing rate of kidnappings in the country. Rationality dictates that security agents would become dispirited and malcontent if they feel their welfare is not being adequately catered for. These men and women brave death and bodily harm to confront terrorist groups, bandit groups, communal militias, and other types of groups engaging in kidnappings in the country who are better armed than these security agents. With the growing sense of deprivation, the motivation to put everything on the line to ensure victory over criminal elements would gradually become diminished.

Reports of sponsors and sympathisers of terrorist, bandit, and kidnapping groups among the Nigerian political, religious, and socio-economic elites hinder and frustrate the state's efforts to adequately respond to security issues. Sheikh Gumi, a popular Islamic Cleric, who was formerly an officer in the Nigerian army, is a known sympathiser of bandit groups in Northern Nigeria. The Sheikh trivialised kidnappings by bandits by describing kidnapping as the 'lesser evil' (Ochieng and Kiriungi, 2021). The alleged affiliations of a top placed official in the Buhari administration to terrorist groups in the Middle East with ties to terrorist groups in Nigeria also fuel speculations that there exist fifth columnists in the seats and corridors of

power who deliberately frustrate efforts to ensure the successful prosecution of the campaign against terrorism, banditry, and kidnappings in Nigeria (Michael, 2021; Orjinmo, 2021). Most worrisome are the reports that top military officers arm and reveal sensitive information to terrorist, bandit, and kidnapping groups and even ensure their release after arrest or capture. The case of Alhaji Hamisu Bala 'Wadume' gives credence to these reports. Wadume, a notorious kidnapping kingpin who had established a kidnap-for-ransom empire in the entire Northern Nigeria, was eventually arrested by the police on 6 August 2019. However, a detachment of military officers rescued him from the police when he was being transported to Jalingo, the capital city of Taraba State, North-East Nigeria, killing some police officers in the process and setting him free. He was later re-arrested by the police on 19 April 2019 (Akeregha et al., 2019; Shaban, 2019).

The ease with which government officials negotiate with terrorist, bandit, and kidnap-for-ransom groups, especially in Northern Nigeria, also serves to fuel speculations that some conspirators of these groups exist in government circles. The eagerness and ease with which payment of ransom are made, in line with the premises of the rational choice theory, one of the theories on which this chapter is founded, act as catalysts for more kidnappings in the country as the rewards accruable from kidnappings far outweigh the possibilities of capture or punishment (Musawa, 2021; Onubogu, 2021; Parkinson and Akingbule, 2021).

A corollary of the above is the perceived Buhari administration's support for marauding Fulani militia groups, who under the guise of being Fulani herdsmen loot, kill, and kidnap people for ransom in Nigeria's North-Central, South-East, South-South, and South-West geopolitical zones. President Buhari, a Fulani, is seen as condoning the atrocities being committed by his kinsmen in these geopolitical zones, and his administration's proposal to establish cattle colonies in all the 36 states of the country was interpreted to be an agenda to promote the 'Fulanisation' project (Ekpo and Tobi, 2019; Oluka et al., 2019).

As mentioned under the legal response, premised on the theories of rationality and deterrence, the differentiations between types and kinds of kidnappings and their respective punitive measures may prove to be counter-productive. It has been established that kidnapping is a rational act and that kidnappers weigh odds before taking actions. If expected punishments outweigh expected benefits for a particular line of action, a rational mind refrains from such an endeavour and vice versa. Thus, the perceived outweighing of benefits over costs/punitive measures may have encouraged the growing challenge of kidnappings in the country. The fact that the apprehended kidnapping kingpins have not been booked accordingly has also fuelled the challenge.

There are also many ungoverned spaces within the Nigerian state such as the Sambisa forest, the Rugu forest, and other uncharted dense forests and woodland savannah across the length and breadth of the country, and the many creeks that dot the Niger Delta serve as hideouts for kidnappers and other criminal elements in the country. Many of these forests were cultivated as forest reserves, but their neglect by the various states governments over the years has turned these forests into the habitats of undesirable members of the country.

Recommendations

The security agencies in Nigeria seem overwhelmed by the incidences of kidnappings in the country. There is therefore the need to rethink and rework the country's security architecture to effectively combat the menace of kidnappings within her borders. This study lends its voice to the call for the removal of security from the exclusive legislative list to the concurrent list. The need for state police forces has become more imperative than ever before. Since the state police forces would be composed of citizens who are not only familiar with the terrains of the communities they are to police but also understand the peculiar norms and types of individuals in these communities, crimes detections and preventions would become easier. In the same vein, state police forces would be faster and more decisive in responding to issues of crime than they do presently in the Nigerian state. There is no gainsaying the fact that kidnappings thrive in Nigeria because of the justifiable fear of the people to give information concerning kidnapping activities in their communities to members of the Nigeria Police Force who might later give the details of these informants to the kidnappers. The transfers of police officers from one community or state to the other, more often than not, prevent the creation of the bond necessary for the building of trust between these police officers and the people of the communities they serve. However, state police forces would not be encumbered by such trust issues and would have better access to information needed to proactively deal with criminal issues such as kidnappings in their local communities.

This study also backs the call for the creation of civilian volunteers' forces or vigilante groups duly registered by the government to complement the Nigeria Police Force, especially in the area of information gathering. The establishment of a regional security force in the South-West, the Amotekun Force, is a laudable security initiative, and other geopolitical zones can borrow a leaf from the South-West on this regard. However, these regional security forces should be trained, not only to be combat effective, but to also respect the fundamental rights of Nigerians in the discharge of their responsibilities.

Given the established nexus between insurgency, banditry, and the high rate of kidnappings in Northern Nigeria, government should intensify its campaigns against insurgencies and banditry in the country. The Nigerian military should be equipped with the necessary weapons and knowledge for combatting insurgent groups and bandits. With reports that the Boko Haram group has strongholds in Nigeria's neighbouring countries including Chad, Cameroon, and Niger and that bandits also move across the borders of these countries to loot, kill, and kidnap in Nigerian communities, security at the Nigerian borders should be tightened. The Nigerian government should also collaborate more with the governments of these countries and should also use her membership of ECOWAS to ensure that threats to her interests do not find safe havens anywhere in the West African subregion.

As a corollary to the above, investments into technologies for monitoring activities in Nigeria's 'ungoverned spaces' should be made. Nigeria is dotted with thick forests and intractable creeks which these kidnapping lords use as hideouts. It is no

hidden secret that the heavily dense Sambisa Forest in Borno State, North-East Nigeria, and the Rugu Forest which extends across almost all the states of the North-West zone provide residence for insurgent and bandit groups in that part of the country and that Nigeria's security operatives find it difficult to locate the hideouts of these insurgents and bandits in the forests. However, drones and satellite imaging could be effectively employed to pinpoint the locations of these groups and to direct the military to their locations.

The Nigerian government should also not hesitate to seek help from other countries of the world on how to tackle insurgency, banditry, and kidnappings within her borders. As shown in the study, it took the collaboration between the Colombian and the US governments to stem the tide of kidnappings in Colombia. The globalisation of crime has necessitated a rethink on the ideas of the inviolability of state borders and the interventions in the internal security issues of sovereign states.

Governments, at all levels, also need to take a definite stand on the policy of non-negotiations with kidnappers to reduce the allure of crime. This policy is the norm in Europe and other climes as the uncertainty of ransom being paid and the high-level risk of capture and prosecution serves as deterrents to the criminally minded members of society.

As shown in the study, Nigeria is yet to conclude the prosecution of arrested kidnapping lords, especially Kelvin, Evans, and Wadume arrested in 2013, 2017, and 2019, respectively. All the brick walls in the Nigerian criminal code that kidnappers can hide behind to avoid or prolong prosecutions should be removed. If arrested kidnappers are prosecuted and punished within a short timeframe; it would serve as deterrents to would be kidnappers. The government also needs to clean house by weeding out and prosecuting sympathisers and sponsors of banditry, kidnappings, and terrorism from the military and all governmental institutions and agencies.

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Chapter 16

Non-State Responses to Kidnapping in Nigeria



Elijah Ola Olorunsuwa and Michael B. Aleyomi

Abstract Nigeria is daily confronted with insecurity—banditry and kidnapping among others. In spite of different state’s efforts to reduce the problem, one will notice an obvious increase in cases of kidnapping across the length and breadth of the country. Against this backdrop, the study seeks to assess the efforts and effectiveness of the Non-State Actors (NSAs) to rise up to challenges of the security in Nigeria. In this case, civil society groups have played important roles in public education, policy advocacy and hostage negotiation, while vigilante groups are involved in the fight against kidnappers and rescuing of hostages. This chapter relies on data generated through the secondary method with interpretative method of qualitative data analysis. Accordingly, it is observed to be in Nigeria’s overall interest to embrace collective efforts of both state and non-state actors in combating insecurity. Regardless of the efficiency of NSAs in combating kidnapping and other criminalities, however, state security forces must be re-organized, re-oriented and re-equipped to take on their tasks, as over-reliance on vigilante group is a ticking time bomb.

Introduction

One of the cardinal functions of every government is to ensure that adequate protection of lives and properties of the citizenry within its territorial borders is guaranteed. This all-important function is performed by the enactment of various laws and policies that regulate human conduct and activities of government agencies, as well

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as prescribe stiff penalties for deviants and law defaulters. The establishment, funding, and effective management of security agencies for the purpose of crime fighting and intelligence gathering, coupled with an effective and efficient legal system for quick dispensation of justice, is germane to the fulfilment of this government function (Ebo, 2007). In spite of this, every society is faced with heinous activities of a handful of criminally minded individuals whose everyday ambition is to circumvent the rules and laws for their personal and selfish benefits. Crime rates across borders appear to be on the perpetual increase in spite of various efforts to stem down the scourge. In the view of the growing rate of insecurity, developed states dedicate a chunk of their annual spending on security-related ventures to ensure that adequate security is provided for their citizens.

Nigeria has had a fair share of what appears to be a global trend of insecurity, as crime rate and insecurity within her borders have increased since the return to democratic rule in 1999. The country in recent times has been faced with a high rate of kidnapping across the length and breadth of the country. The trend is worsened by a number of factors which range from political, economic, ethno-religious, and the systemic failure of the Nigerian state (Aleyomi & Nwagwu, 2020). On the economic front, the failure of the Nigerian state to engage the majority of her army of youths in any gainful employment and the decaying economy of the country has made some of them take to crime (kidnapping for ransom) as a way of economic survival. On the political front, it has been argued that political opponents are in the habit of sponsoring criminal activities against the government as a way of bringing to the fore the ineptitudes of the government in power. This view was corroborated by the former national security adviser, late Andrew Azzazzi (1953–2012) when he declared that Boko Haram's festering and deadly attacks were caused by undemocratic practices in the then ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) (Leadership, April 28th, 2012).

It has also been argued that the top echelon of the security forces in the country has always continuously frustrated efforts to effectively combat deadly groups like Boko Haram in the North-east and Banditry in the Northwest (Oyewole, 2020). These groups are notorious for kidnapping and other criminal activities. Similarly, from a political angle, small and medium arms that thugs are armed with by politicians to outdo political opponents during elections are never retrieved from them. These thugs relying on the arms at their disposal freely take to crime such as kidnapping and robbery after elections (Ebo, 2007). The failure of the security architecture of the country to provide an enduring mechanism to prevent crime through effective and efficient intelligence gathering and the inability of the nation's security outfit to effectively combat insecurity have, in no small measure, aided the growing trends in criminal activities in the countries. Kidnapping has emerged as a major security challenge in Nigeria, where the fate of the victims is largely of huge concern (Oyewole, 2016a).

The state, which is supposed to possess the monopoly of legitimate use of force as well as the major actor in the business of security of lives and properties, has to a very large degree failed in Nigeria (Ozden & Kwabe, 2019). The brutality that characterised the operation of Boko Haram insurgency, Banditry activities, and other criminal elements and the inadequacy of state responses have necessitated many

civilians in the affected communities to rise up to some defensive roles of self and community policing (Oyewole, 2017). It is, however, the obvious failure of the national security system to effectively deliver on their mandate that has necessitated various groups across the country to come together, which has led to the increase in the number of non-state actors that are operating against kidnapping in Nigeria.

Many non-state actors have sprung up to meet the security needs of society. This is a very controversial topic in both local and international security discourse because the government which controls the armed forces meant to protect the country from internal and external threats is corrupt, have no regard whatsoever for human rights, or politicise the security architecture of the country. In cases such as these, it is difficult for the citizens to trust the state and security agents. It is, however, right to assert that security is better achieved via trust and collaboration between the state and the citizens. More non-state actors such as vigilante groups and militias are coming into existence with popular support (mostly without constitutional provisions). As such, Sebastian (2010) asserts that:

Non-state actors have received greater attention from scholars and policy makers in recent years as their prominence and persistence in many weak states have become increasingly acknowledged; it is uncontroversial to argue that state authority even in most developed state is limited in many ways (p. 10).

Without any doubt most non-state actors against insecurity have the capability of serving the dual purposes of bringing positive efforts to bear on the situation through a series of interventions and programmes either directly against criminal elements (vigilante and militant groups) or against government with the view of compelling the response of government (civil society organisations like Bring Back Our Girls groups). On the negative side, vigilante groups have the tendency of engaging in right abuse of the members of the public while some may go into other criminal activities using vigilantism as a cover. The tendency of the CLOs serving a political purpose rather than pressuring the government to act is very high. For the above-mentioned reasons, non-state actors in Nigeria stand a chance of constituting themselves into threat(s) to the people they seek to protect on one side while possibly assisting the state in the restoration of law and order on the other hand. Of course, they are not a substitute to state power or other agencies of the state, as most people believe. It is therefore pertinent to look critically into the formation and existence of all non-state actors across Nigeria with the view of assessing them vis-à-vis the role they perform.

Conceptual Review

Kidnapping in Nigeria

Kidnapping as a concept has a long history internationally. It has in one way or the other been experienced in almost every part of the world, including the developed climes such as the USA, France, Britain, and Germany. As pointed out by Ezemenaka (2018), kidnapping is a worldwide phenomenon, which can be said to have existed

since the beginning when humans established and coordinated society that provides a well-planned attack on other people. Kidnapping in Nigeria represents a very critical phenomenal which has recently dominated discussions among scholars, security experts, policymakers, civil society organisations, and law enforcement agents. Kidnapping in Nigeria represents a very critical concept of discussion among scholars because of its fast-evolving process. In the view of Assanvo and Okereke (2019), kidnapping is a many-sided criminal venture which is perpetrated by different armed groups who operate in virtually all platforms such as the sea, land, and air; the purpose of kidnapping varies from one armed group to another.

Kidnapping as a criminal act, according to Oyewole (2016b), is captured in Section 364, Chapter 77, of the Nigerian Criminal Code Act of 1990; it is described as an ‘unlawful imprisonment of any person in such a manner as to prevent him [or her] from applying to a court for his [or her] release or from discovering to any other person the place where he [or she] is imprisoned, or in such a manner as to prevent any person entitled to have access to him [or her] from discovering the place where he [or she] is imprisoned.’ Oyewole (2016b) further described kidnapping as the unlawful seizures, detention, and deprivation of personal liberty of a person against his or her will.

Kidnapping in Nigeria takes different forms, which according to Oyewole (2016a) is a function of the behaviours and characters of the captors vis-à-vis the fate of the hostages, and provides a clue to why a victim is kidnapped. However, kidnapping in Nigeria has been identified with perpetrators such as bandits, ritualists, fraudsters, baby factories, insurgents, sea pirates, and terrorists (Oyewole, 2016a). It has been established by extant literature that kidnapping in Nigeria is majorly encouraged by the following reasons: ritual (faith induced sacrifice or wealth induced), economic purpose (kidnapping for ransom), and political reason (to settle political scores) (Osumah & Aghedo, 2011, p. 277).

Kidnapping can be described as a forceful or fraudulent abduction of individuals for reasons ranging from economic, political, religious, or for the purpose of self-determination (Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2017). Cited in Ajah, Nwokoma, and Okpan (2017), Uzoma and Nwanego noted in their own contribution that kidnapping is the act of capturing and detaining a person by force or deceit. They further elucidated on the process to include when a person is forcefully taken away from his family and friends with the aim of making profit. That is why Ani and Nweke (2018) further elaborated that kidnapping cannot take place without these two parties, ‘the living prey’ (the victim) and heartless predator (the kidnapper). They also view kidnapping as an act of taking a person or a group of persons into captivity to achieve a defined objective.

Non-state Actors (NSAs)

The concept of non-state actor assumes different meanings to different people. Nseabasi (2010) describes it in the light of 2000 Coutonou agreement, where the term is used to refer to CSOs and NGOs, whose aim is to influence government

policies. In the same vein, Sebastian (2010) notes that governance lens allows us to look at formal (state actors) as well as informal (non-state actors) institutions and then observe that non-state actors do not function in a political vacuum and rarely in the complete absence of state structures.

In international relation non-state actors refer to any actor, including individuals, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), multinational corporation (MNCs), and terrorist groups, who plays a noticeable role in the international stage (UN 2005). Non-state actors, however, in this context refer to their effects, impacts, and roles across their national borders. Prior to now, the role and position of non-state actors is not recognised in the international community like the nation state that was recognised as the only actor in the system. Andrew (2016) views non-state actors as a body that is not state's own (agency) and is beyond state control; this body includes armed groups, terrorists, civil society, religion groups, or corporations.

According to Ahmed-Suka (2020), non-state actors can be seen as those actors that are without conventional authorisation, but provide protection and justice to the people. From Ahmed-Suka's view, non-state actors provide swift and immediate response(s) to security situations in their locality and serve as advocates for justice in the Nigeria's context. The Niger Delta Militia group, the Civilian Joint Task Force in the North-east, the Bakassi Boys in the South-east, and the Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC) in the South-west to mention a few are basically out for security and justice in Nigeria. Robert and Ash (2009) sees non-state actors from a rather more comparative view. He posits that the definition of non-state actors varies from state to state. However, it encircles private individuals, civil society organisations, private companies, and armed groups.

Historical Overview of Kidnapping in Nigeria

Kidnapping as a criminal activity pre-dated the birth of the geographical entity called Nigeria. Kidnapping was a popular means of acquiring slaves being sold to foreigners (Amachree, 2017). In the precolonial days, able-bodied men and women were ambushed, abducted, and sold into slavery. This was the practice for over a century before the abolition of slave trade in 1886. Apart from kidnapping for slavery, it was a common practice across the Nigerian society to kidnap people for the purpose of ritual sacrifice to gods (Oyewole, 2016b). In this case, kidnapped victims were offered as sacrifice to gods in funerals and other traditional ceremonies. Controversially, kidnapping for ritual was backed by some of traditions and cultural practices and beliefs. It is usually said in Yoruba parlance that *akii f'omo ore bo're*, which literally means that you cannot sacrifice the native (s) to the gods. The implication of this is that if sacrifices must be made, and the custom forbade the use of native, strangers must be sought mostly through kidnapping. In 1949, the Oba of Efon Alaye in the present-day Ekiti State, Oba Samuel Adeniran Asusumasa Atewogboye II was sentenced to death by the colonial government for the kidnapping of a 15-month-old baby Adediwura for ritual purpose. The trend of kidnapping

for ritual became greatly reduced with the advent of Islam and Christianity that forbid the practice on one hand and the law of the land that criminalises such act.

In 1984, precisely, on the 5th of July, Alh Umaru Dikko, one of the leading diaspora critics of Buhari Military junta, who fled the country for the fear of arrest for allegedly embezzling about \$1 billion (£625 m) of Nigeria's oil fund, was kidnapped from his London home by a combined team of Nigerian and Israeli personnel. Dikko was successfully abducted from his residence to an unknown destination where he was packed in a wooden crate measuring 4.5×5.5 feet for an onward transportation to Nigeria. The plan was, however, foiled by customs service personnel led by a young British Charles David Morrow at Stansted Airport where surveillance has been mounted due to a report filed by Dikko's secretary Elizabeth Hayes who witnessed the kidnapping of Dikko (Akinsanya, 1985; Last, 2012).

Kidnapping became the *modus operandi* in the Niger Delta region in the 1960s by the likes of Adaka Borro, Nottingham Dick, and Ken Saro Wiwa among others (Alumuna et al., 2017) who were the earliest campaigners against the economic marginalisation of the region. The venom (then) was directed at expatriates, top government officials, and oil workers. A peaceful struggle for self-determination and control of resources that started later turned violent, such that criminal activities like kidnapping, bombing of oil installations, and oil bunkering have become their mode of operations. As of 2007, the situation in the Niger Delta region had degenerated into a full state of lawlessness such that lots of young men have taken to arms, fighting for the control of oil resources in their areas. All these took place in the midst of pure criminal activities, kidnapping, oil bunkering, and destruction of pipelines and other oil installations (Alumuna et al., 2017). At the beginning, the Niger Delta militant groups did not have kidnapping for ransom in mind, but rather it was a means of sending strong messages to the government and the international community about the sorry state of their environment. However, in 2006, an oil company paid the sum of ₦ 300,000 without demand as ransom for a kidnapped staff; the ransom brought controversy among the members of the militia group as majority of them thought it to be an opportunity to have enough resources for the procurement of more arms (Amachree, 2017; Omotola, 2006, 2009).

The adopted method of kidnapping for ransom by the Niger Delta militants appears to have formed the bedrock of the increase in the scourge in recent times, as the number of kidnapping cases continues to grow at an alarming rate. For instance, Ezemenaka (2018) reported that over 2000 people have been kidnapped between 2014 and 2017 (including the Chibok school girls, politicians, and influential persons among others). In 2019 alone, over 300 cases of kidnapping were recorded in Adamawa State by the police, while numerous cases went unreported (Vanguard, 12th January 2020). The Nation Newspaper of 10th May 2002 had reported as follows:

...those involved in kidnapping are mere business men who just happen to be on the illegal side and depriving them of demands will automatically shut down supply. it is one of the reasons why they (kidnappers) choose their victims carefully before carrying out their operation.

Far from the economic and ritual reasons for kidnapping as earlier discussed, many scholars have argued that kidnapping today in Nigeria has political and religious coloration; it is political in the sense that corrupt politicians use it as a means of distorting the government of the day and using it as a means of instilling fear in their opposition; it is religious because most of the groups claim to be pursuing a religious agenda as we have seen in the case of Boko Haram (*Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lid'dawa'ati Wal Jihad*). Cox (2018), a humanitarian worker in the North-east, had reported that 'Survivors report horrific incidents where heavily armed militants have killed, maimed, burned and kidnapped Christians.... We are targeted because of our faith,' said one distraught Christian leader in Borno State. Fashioning their kidnapping operation after the Niger Delta militants, Al Okoli (2019) hinted that Boko Haram insurgents use the gains of kidnapping to keep afloat their insurgency activities as the insurgents engage in single or group kidnapping as a means of generating money to fund their terrorism activities.

There seems to be a gross under-reporting of the wave of insecurity in Nigeria (particularly in the Northern region) especially kidnapping. Hence, the incidences of kidnapping have been gravely under-rated. Assanvo and Okereke (2019) agreed with the above assertion when they averred that:

Kidnapping incidents are generally underreported in Nigeria several units within the federal police are dealing with this threat, including the anti-kidnapping units and the Intelligence Response Team. Hundreds of officers have been deployed to patrol the highway linking Abuja, Kaduna, Zaria and Kano to tackle kidnapping along that road, which records scores of incidents

Boko Haram after some years added another dangerous trend into their mode of operation, by styling their operation after the Niger Delta militants in kidnapping. UNICEF (2018) reported that Boko Haram had abducted more than 1000 children since 2013, including 276 girls from Chibok in Borno State and 113 from Dapchi in Yobe State. The group had abducted hundreds of people over the years from attacks on villages in North-East Nigeria (several of these kidnappings are unreported) and in neighbouring countries such as Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. Some other sources, however, reported that more than 10,000 people were kidnapped by the insurgents across the Lake Chad region between 2011 and 2020 (Oyewole & Onuoha, 2021). Kidnapping has become part of a burgeoning business in the Southern part of the country, such that it appears to be the most appealing and lucrative means to wealth among the youths across the South-east states. Anambara, Abia, and Imo States have become a hotbed of commercially motivated kidnapping in Akure. In the South-west, kidnapping activities are mainly on the inter-state highways such as the Iwo to Osogbo road, the Akure to Ilesa road through Ondo State, and the Ijebu to Jesa highway. Ondo State appears to be the capital of kidnapping in the South-west as it is more notorious for kidnapping incidence (CLEEN, 2012) just like Enugu and Imo in the South-east. Record has it that 5% of the population in the South-western region (Ekiti, Ogun, Oyo, Ondo, Osun, and Lagos) has been one way or another victim of kidnapping.

Non-state Actors' Responses to Kidnapping in Nigeria

Non-state actors like the vigilante and hunter groups as stated earlier are not new in Nigeria; for instance, traditional hunters have secured the forest and even communities from the precolonial days through the colonial era; in fact, they were backed by colonial government especially during World War II, but the 1990s witnessed a high level of proliferation of vigilante groups in Nigeria due to an upsurge in failings of the state's security mechanism to provide adequate security (Leighan & Piero, 2017). Ideally, the state has the monopoly and mechanism to protect its citizens from themselves and others. However, on one too many cases they have created room for doubts about their competence as a legitimate body. Many experts agree that vigilante and hunter groups can be very effective in providing safety and security by providing information about members of society and raiding kidnappers' hideouts.

As a fallout of the long years of military misrule in Nigeria, ethnically based militia groups in the 1990s have proliferated either to provide a common front for the people or to protect them against the claws of the cruel government of that time. Prominent among these ethnic militia groups are the Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC) and the Bakassi Boys. The OPC, whose name was coined from that of Oduduwa, the ancestor of the Yoruba race, was established in August 1994 with the primary aim of defending, protecting, and promoting the interests of the Yorubas. The Bakassi Boys were created in 1998 by a group of traders in the eastern city of Aba to provide security for their wares against robbery (Uzuegbu-Wilson, 2016; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2006, Nolte, 2007). The two groups beyond their initial mandates of protecting the ethnic interests of their respective people later ventured into crime fighting; both groups have done a lot in the prevention and foiling of kidnapping incidences in their domains.

For instance, Bakassi Boys foiled the kidnapping of two kids being transported in a coffin in Aloji, Aba, in November 2019 (Nairaland, 2020). The OPC has provided a very vocal voice against kidnapping in the South-west. Price Osibote, the new leader of the OPC, was in June 2019 reported to have issued a stern warning to kidnappers operating in the South-west to vacate the area or get nabbed. He was quoted in the following words:

Time is up for these criminals abducting people. This is the final warning to them; they should stop now, or relocate elsewhere outside the South-West. If they fail to do so, they will soon meet their Waterloo (Daily Post, June, 17, 2019).

Earlier in May 2019, Afenifere a pan-Yoruba movement has joined the group of vocal voices against kidnapping in the region; they had declared war against armed herdsmen who are fingered in the numerous criminal activities in the area (Sun, May 11, 2019). In recognition of the enormous role of the OPC in maintaining security in Yoruba land, the Inspector General of Police, Muhammed Adamu, in September 2019, convened a stakeholders security summit in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital, where he revealed his plan and the readiness of the police to work with the OPC and vigilance groups in the region to maintain peace (Tribune November 30, 2019). The most recent non-state action against kidnapping in Nigeria is the

establishment of the South-west Security Network code named Operation Amotekun which was launched on the 9th of January 2020, with the sole aim of tackling kidnapping and armed robbery in the region. Amotekun came to existence through the decision of governors from the six South-west states (Ogun, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Oyo, and Lagos States) to provide alternative means of security in the region (Pulse, 9 January 2020; Punch, 29 January 2020).

In response to kidnapping and other activities of terrorist and insurgent groups in the Northern region of Nigeria, the government created a Joint Task Force (JTF), comprising of the combined team of the armed forces, the Nigerian police, and other para-military outfits to curb the menace of the activities of the insurgents; however, not much was recorded in terms of achievements. The minimal success of the JTF in the fight against the insurgents increased the necessity for a community-based action against the activities of the insurgents. The earliest non-state security outfit to emerge in the fights against the insurgent was the 'yan gora' (otherwise known as the Civilian Joint Task Force) which started in Maiduguri in 2013; this was mostly common described as 'a child of circumstance' or a 'child of necessity', required to save the community (Nagrajan, 2018; Ozden & Kwabe, 2019).

It has been established by Ozden and Kwabe (2019) that the CJTF provide the Nigerian government with huge support to eradicate Boko Haram insurgency in Borno and the North-east. The group is reported to have over 26,000 members with about 23% the members being women; they also possess weapons which are government approved. Due to the successes recorded by the yan gora in Maiduguri, it caught the attention of the government that the outfit was funded and the boys were put on stipends and allowances, which was replicated in the other local government areas of the state. In the Borno hinterland, the yan gora efforts were complemented by other two groups, namely *kungiyar maharba* (local hunters) and *yan banga* (vigilantes) (Nagrajan, 2018).

The combined efforts of these groups (of) yan gora, yan banga, and kungiyar maharba that make up the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) have been very helpful in securing their communities against further incursion by the insurgents. Other related groups that have emerged are Borno Youth Empowerment Scheme (BOYES), Borno State Youth Vanguard (BSYV) or Borno Volunteer Youth Group (BVYG), and Borno Youth Association for Peace and Justice (BYAPJ), among others (Oyewole, 2017).

Implications of Non-state Actors' Fight Against Kidnapping in Nigeria

Positive Implication of Non-state Actors

The essential role of non-state actors against kidnapping and by extension security in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised due to the impacts they make in providing security in their areas of operation. The members of the society seem to repose more confidence in the NSAs than the state-owned security apparatus. Ozden and Kwabe

(2019) noted that the importance of non-state actors (NSAs) cannot be condemned to the background as they are about the only one offering direct security to the people. It is germane to emphasise here that as noted above about the manifestations of NSAs in the fight against insecurity in Nigeria, NSAs could either be manifested in the form of an organised armed group or it can take the form of organised civil society organisations (CLOs). BringBackOurGirls as noted by Olatunde (2022) instigated an international and national disquiet against the kidnapping of the schoolgirls such that the likes of Pope Francis, Kim Kardashian, The Rock, and Michelle Obama continued to mount pressure on the government of Nigeria through the Twitter hashtags. The combined efforts of the CJTF and the military in May 2021 were reported to have neutralised 9 insurgents who attempted to kidnap some locals during iftar in Jiddari Polo, Juddumri, Aldawari, and Kawila communities in Borno State (Muhammed, 2021).

As stated earlier by Ozden and Kwabe (2019), one of the major advantages of non-state actors is the direct security they offer to the people as seen in the case of Bakassi Boys in 2003 who were out to cleanse the South-east of criminal activities; they indeed recorded tremendous achievement; the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) emerged in 2013 in the North-east, which Nagrajan (2018) of the Center for Civilian in Conflict (CCIC) applauded for their gallantry and bravery in fighting insurgency. For instance, On 21 April 2016, a sweeping operation by the military and members of CJTF across Mufurundi, Kaleri, Masemari, Bego, Bale, Gadzama, and Gagantilo neutralised the improvised explosive device (IED) buried by the militants in one of the towns and rescued 157 hostages at the cost of nine of their capture's lives in another. Similar operation by the army and the CJTF in Iza, Mbollena, and Shamari killed 29 insurgents and rescued 72 abducted civilians on March 28, 2016 (Oyewole, 2017).

It is without doubt that the people no longer have absolute trust in the state security architecture in providing the needed security; rather the different NSAs enjoy the confidence and support from the various communities they operate in. Non-state actors serve as a link between the community and the police/military in the area of information sharing.

However, the CJTF has been regarded as a swift response team by some members of the society who view them as the best solution and working solution to the insecurity. Non-state actors like these various vigilante groups, ward/district heads, and some category of non-governmental organisations have an advantage over the military because of their familiarity with the terrain and they are equipped with information about members of the society that are not readily available to the military. While Denney (2014) and Ozden and Kwabe (2019) underscored the relevance of the efforts of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in North-eastern Nigeria are of the opinion that:

The involvement of local groups can be advantageous since they are more familiar with the community and its people. Although, some scholars argue that the involvement of Non state actors would create a plurality of security...

Dennis (2014) further asserted that the Civilian Joint Task Force has started a patrol watch to escort children to and from schools and market. They also have been involved in periodic and thorough checks of vehicles that are coming into the states by setting up checkpoints and roadblocks as the case may be.

Negative Implications on Nigeria's Security

Notwithstanding the enormous advantages of NSAs, their existence has some negative implications. They have constituted numerous problems for host communities, especially in Nigeria. This mainly stems from the fact that they have no constitutional provisions and cannot be held accountable for their actions since they are the only body that provides direct security in most parts of the nation (Ozden & Kwabe, 2019). Many scholars are in agreement about the negative impact of allowing legally binding and non-legally non-state actors in the fight against insecurity. Ozden and Kwabe (2019) assert that there are problems that come with engaging actors who are not legally binding by the law.

However, they further explain that the dilution of state power will lead to plurality which may serve as a threat to national security. For example, the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) who are involved in fighting insecurity in the North-east have been accused of involvement in a series of crimes ranging from sexual abuse and abuse of fundamental human rights to theft, among others (Oyewole, 2017). Notwithstanding the enormous advantage of this group against kidnapping and insecurity in North-eastern Nigeria, there have been a series of allegations of sexual harassment, theft, abuses, exploitation, and extortion of money from the villagers; charges of intimidation and bullying of civilians were put against some members of this group (UNDP, 2019; Mohammed, 2020).

Ozden and Kwabe (2019) agreed that Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) was on several occasions accused of involvement in crimes like extrajudicial killings of sometimes innocent members of the society who are suspected to be Boko Haram members; some have been involved in assaulting those thought to be associated with armed groups. They are said to restrict movement outside IDP camps and use their positions of power for sexual abuse and exploitation. They have also been accused of intimidating civilians while employing punitive justice measures to settle personal scores and trade drugs and have been implicated in the commission of extortion and theft, including the diversion of relief materials and humanitarian aids. Measures have been taken to bring the perpetrators to book; for example, detected drug users have been asked to retire from their positions. Some members of the civilian joint task force have come out to condemn the measures as they accuse the Nigerian army for also abusing drugs among other accusations.

Non-state actors in crime fighting pose a very serious threat to the future security of the nation as the weakness of the state's security structure that necessitates their establishment can be explored to wage war against the state. A peaceful NSAs at

formation has every tendency of being radicalised and cajoled into carrying arms against the state as it is the case of Boko Haram which before 2009 has been existing as a non-criminal group. The susceptibility of non-state actors to crime and criminality can be described as a thin line between life and death. Apart from the above the tendencies of high-jacking NSAs by selected individuals for political gains are very high. Thus, the politicisation of vigilante, especially around elections, is particularly high in Nigeria, because elections for offices can be extremely competitive and violent.

Non state actors are likely to promote sharp division and segregation since most non-state actors are (mostly) formed along ethnic and (sometimes) religious lines. Non-state actors in Nigeria are birthed to protect a particular region, ethnic group, or religion; for example, CJTF is found in the northern part of the country; the operation Amotekun is found in the southern part of the country.

Conclusion

An in-depth analysis has been provided about the actions of non-states actors (NSAs) against kidnapping in Nigeria. Though there are scanty scholastic material on the subject, but much effort has been made to draw the link between the popularisation of the NSAs and the weakened security architecture of the Nigerian state. The obvious lack of capacity by the Nigerian security outfits has (expectedly) strengthened the lack of trust in the state's security apparatus by the citizens. Conversely, the lack of trust by the citizens in the ability of the states to provide adequate security has enormously increased the need and support for the NSAs by society.

It has been revealed that the NSAs have being immensely helpful in providing coordinated actions against kidnapping and insecurity in general across Nigeria. However, on the reversed side, they are also susceptible to negative influences against society, as many of them have been implicated in several criminal activities they profess to fight against.

Be that as it may, in the current conjecture, the place of the NSAs (despite the discovered negative sides) cannot be condemned to the background as they have come to register their importance on the security landscape of Nigeria. In fact, the state security apparatus has openly formed synergy with them to fight insecurity. This is buttressed by the meeting Mr. IG held with the OPC in Ibadan South-west Nigeria in November 2019 (Tribune November 30, 2019).

Note must, however, be taken of this simple fact that, irrespective of their (NSAs) effectiveness in fighting against insecurity, the conventional security outfits must be re-organised, 're-orientated', and 're-equipped' to assume their roles, as overreliance on NSAs is a time bomb that is just taking time to incubate and prepare for explosion.

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Chapter 17

Kidnapping and Hostage Negotiation in Nigeria



Seun Bamidele, Dickson Ajisafe, and Babatope M. Ajiboye

Abstract Kidnapping remains a threat to Nigeria's long-term security, stability, and development. In recent years, the Nigerian state has been bedeviled with kidnapping activities and this challenge is being exploited by other criminal networks which take advantage of the state's under-policed localities to forcefully move vulnerable individuals to unwanted and unknown destinations. The challenges associated with kidnapping have become a serious concern in Nigeria, a country that is already fragile as a result of violent conflicts, corruption, poverty, and economic hardship. Paradoxically, the Nigerian state still has a success story for negotiation and protection response which has effectively served as a substitute to suppress kidnapping. The objectives of this paper are to examine the challenges of kidnapping and its social impacts in Nigeria as well as interrogating the mechanisms maximized by the Nigerian government in its negotiation efforts with kidnappers. The paper does this with a view to conceptualize kidnapping in the context of Nigeria's experience and outline the pros and cons of government's strategies in negotiating with kidnappers and criminal networks in the country. Maximizing extant literature and relevant case studies, this development is rigorously analyzed through academic lens and raises questions such as what is the historical and operational dimension of kidnapping and hostage taking in Nigeria and its social impacts on country? What are the implications of using (worst alternative of) ransom payment in negotiating with kidnappers? Is the willingness to negotiate with kidnappers through (worst alternative of) ransom payment encouraging more kidnapping activities in Nigeria?

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Finally, what role should the government play in deciding whether to negotiate or not with (ransom payment) worst alternative?

Introduction

Kidnapping remains a threat to the peace, security, development, and stability of Nigeria. The Nigerian state is being exploited by kidnappers and other criminal networks, who take advantage of state's under-policed localities to move vulnerable persons to unintended destinations. In Nigeria, the activities of kidnappers have constituted a major threat to the security of its citizens, residents, and sustainable development. As a fragile state, criminals such as kidnappers deliberately exploit the social, economic, and political challenges in Nigeria, a country that is characterized with the problems of corruption, illiteracy, poverty, ungovernable spaces, insurgency, weak law enforcement as well as other institutional challenges. Paradoxically, Nigeria also possesses a success story for hostage negotiation and protection response which has effectively served as a substitute to suppress kidnapping. However, even though Nigeria has made tremendous efforts to solve the menace of kidnapping, yet there is still much to do to address the government negotiation efforts and mechanisms with kidnappers and their networks in order to finally tackle the challenges of kidnapping of vulnerable individuals in the country (Aghedo, 2015; Deléan, 2021; Parkinson & Akingbule, 2021).

As noted by scholars such as Osumah and Iro (2011), Onuoha (2014), Badiora (2015), and Oyewole (2015), Nigeria has earned a reputation of being one of the African countries where kidnapping of vulnerable people has become a norm, with internal kidnappings making up the vast majority of kidnapping activities. However, there are several awareness-raising strategies in order to curb future kidnapping activities in the country, while stakeholders such as NGOs and government officials are also helping to tackle the act of kidnapping, even though their activities are mainly focusing on preventive aspect through negotiation (Adibe, 2009; Olaleye, et al., 2012). At one point or the other, the government of Nigeria has drawn the attention of the public, the media, and politicians to the activities of kidnappers and their networks with stories of innocent people, including students who have suffered, been exploited, and abused in their captivity (Campbell, 2020). With such a perception of reality dominating public understanding of what kidnapping implies in practical terms, yet academics and the government are still struggling to keep up with this enduring phenomenon. The objectives of this chapter are to examine the challenges of kidnapping and hostage taking in Nigeria, conceptualize its operational definition, and discuss its dimensions and impacts on victims and the country as well as interrogating the mechanisms maximized by the government of Nigeria in its negotiation efforts with kidnappers. The significance of this study cannot be underestimated considering the mental, emotional, and lasting health impacts of kidnapping on the victims in particular and the security well-being of the state in general. The chapter approaches this study with a view to analytically outline the

aforementioned as well as pros and cons of Nigeria government's strategies in negotiating with kidnappers and their criminal networks in the country. Maximizing extant literature and relevant case studies, the chapter critically examines this debate in the following sections. The first section opens up the discourse of kidnapping and hostage taking followed by its evolutionary developments in the context of the Nigerian state. The third section addresses conceptualization of kidnapping in the context of Nigeria's experience followed by the mechanisms of negotiating with kidnappers. The fifth section of the chapter examines the implications of the use of ransom payment as a negotiation mechanism with kidnappers by the government of Nigeria and the role of the Nigerian government in its negotiation efforts with kidnappers, while the last section presents the conclusion and recommendation of the study.

Evolutionary Developments of Kidnapping Activities and Hostage Taking in Nigeria

Incidence of kidnapping in human society is as old as time. In biblical time, the nephew of Abraham, Lot, was said to be captured and taken away until his uncle undertook a rescue mission to get him and his property back from his captors (Genesis, 14:14–15). With reference to Nigeria, kidnapping activity and hostage taking in the country started as far back as couples of decades ago with the media reports of diverse cases of individuals declared missing. As Chidi (2014) noted, kidnapping of individuals rapidly became domesticated in the last ten years in Nigeria as the volatile oil rich regions of the country, specifically the Niger Delta region, started witnessing this phenomenon on a large scale with prominent targets being foreign oil workers, including some Nigerians, who were engaged in oil businesses. Beside the Niger Delta region of the country, the activities of kidnappers have extended its reach to other parts of Nigeria such as Kano and Kaduna in the far northern part of the country, including the South-East and South-South of the country which have equally become known as “the kidnappers” playgrounds of Nigeria (Chidi, 2014).

In Africa, countries such as Nigeria, Mali, Ghana, Cameroun, Somalia, and Kenya are pruned to kidnapping and hostage taking incidences. Nevertheless, Nigeria has been observed to be taking a lead among the aforementioned countries with its increasing experiences of kidnapping incidences. Specifically, kidnapping activity in Nigeria came to the attention of the world with the incidence of the kidnap of not less than 276 female students from Chibok secondary school in Borno State, Nigeria in April 2014—an incidence that was claimed to be orchestrated by the Islamist insurgent group popularly called “Boko Haram” (Obileye & George, 2021). Following this development was another popular occurrence of kidnapping situation which involved 113 Dapchi children in Yobe State, Nigeria in February 2018 (Obileye & George, 2021). Beside the Chibok and Dapchi incidences of

kidnapping in the Nigerian state, another report of the phenomenon of kidnapping in the country was the incidence of Clifford Orji in Lagos State Nigeria. As Obileye and George (2021) argued, kidnapping report in South-west Nigeria was never a common occurrence until the discovery of the kidnapping activities of Chukwudi Dumeme Onuamadike, popularly known as “Evans” in Lagos State, Nigeria. This discovery blew out the clandestine practices of kidnapping of high-profile members of the society in the region; a development that consequently prompted the Federal Government of Nigeria to commence the nailing down of activities of kidnappers in the country (Obileye & George, 2021).

At this juncture, it is important to raise the query why is the activity of kidnapping and hostage taking becoming rampant in the Nigerian state? The response to this question is multifaceted in nature as it combines social-economic and political motivations. It could be argued that the practice of kidnapping as well as hostage taking or abduction in Nigeria became so rampant because hostage taking or kidnapping directly deals with insecurity of human lives—which consequently renders the victims incapacitated at the mercy of their captors; hence, the act of kidnapping always and easily catches the attention of normal human beings in an ideal human society. In other words, the fact that kidnapping directly threatens human lives makes this illegal operation becomes an attractive activity that could be leveraged by kidnappers to catch the attention of citizenry and the government to accomplish a specific goal, which could be political, economic, or social in nature.

Oyewole and Onuoha (2021) buttress the above point while lucubrating on possible reasons for the sporadic activities of kidnapping in the Nigerian state. In their argument, the authors claimed that there are numbers of reasons while kidnapping or abduction has become a well-known tactic employed by terrorist groups as well as criminal networks in Nigeria and beyond. Among other reasons, kidnapping always attracts widespread publicity, which is one of the channels of boosting the image and the visibility of such groups. Second, kidnapping or hostage taking can also be adopted as a bargaining chip for the release of members of a particular terror group or criminal network, apprehended under the watch of the state. Third, by taking hostages, terrorists or criminal networks often gain other concessions beyond attracting attention to themselves and their cause. Moreover, kidnapping for ransom purposes is also a useful source of funding for terror groups. Finally, kidnapping is a useful way to expose the weakness of the affected governments. This implies that both the act of hostage taking and counter-measures launched by the affected governments are a literal expression of being vulnerable, more particularly if the hostage takers can manipulate the media (Oyewole & Onuoha, 2021).

In his argument, Oyewole, 2015 espoused on the operational dimension of kidnappers whose makeup commonly involves a group of criminals with firearms and phones. The usage of firearms enables them to release terror and fear on their victims—in other words, the use of guns by kidnappers enables them to transmit threat and dreadfulness on their victims and consequently psychologically render them incapacitated, while the usage of phones enables them to communicate with potential relatives of their victims for negotiation and ransom-dialogue purposes.

Conceptualizing Kidnapping in the Context of Nigeria's Experience

In a simple definition or description, the term *kidnap* could mean to abduct, carry of, capture, seize, snatch, or hold to ransom. In other words, to kidnap a person or a group of individuals means to abduct them; to carry them off, to capture them against their interest, to seize them, to snatch them away to a specific location or to hold them to ransom against their will. Kidnapping an individual or a group of people is tantamount to a form of hostage taking of such people. This is usually done in circumstances that involve a forceful seizure or capture and relocation of captured individuals from the venue of attack or seizure to a different location, which sometimes might be known or unknown to the victims, most of the times, for ransom purposes (Oyewole & Onuoha, 2021).

Kidnapping is often done when the perpetrator desires to achieve a political, social, and religious goal or desires to obtain a ransom. Kidnapping or hostage taking is an unconventional political and economic practice that is often associated with non-state armed groups as well as groups such as organized bandits, pirates, terrorists, militias, insurgents, privateers, warlords, syndicates, ritualists, human traffickers, slave traders, and baby factory promoters (Oyewole & Onuoha, 2021). Further, kidnapping or hostage taking is a phenomenon that occurs when a person or a group is grabbed, captured, seized, or forcefully taken away and illegally arrested, confined, detained, or incarcerated against his or her free consent. The act of kidnapping or hostage taking is sometimes perpetrated by an individual or organization to use the victim as a means or an object of bargaining with a target for political, social, and economic benefits.

With reference to the Nigerian state, what does an act of kidnapping or hostage taking imply? In Nigeria, an act of kidnapping, abduction, or hostage taking of an individual is a punishable offense under the law. As Oyewole and Onuoha (2021) noted, kidnapping, abducting, or hostage taking of an individual or a group under the Nigerian legal system and international law constitutes a crime. This is established in Section 364 of the Criminal Code Act (1990) and Section 11 of the Terrorism Prevention Act 2011 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Oyewole & Onuoha, 2021).

Understanding the Nigerian's Government Negotiation Mechanisms with Kidnappers

The strategies of negotiating with kidnappers are now generating and producing more kidnappers in the enterprise of kidnapping in Nigeria (Campbell, 2020; Munshi, 2021; McLaughlin, 2021). In other words, the increasing level of the incidence of kidnapping in the Nigerian state cannot be underestimated, which is largely due to the inter-section of economic and social values derived from kidnapping

activities. Therefore, it is essential that the kidnapping of innocent people for ransom purposes becomes a critical issue. While the agenda of the Nigerian government to prevent kidnapping for ransom is an ongoing process, it is also helpful to investigate how and what mechanism is being employed by the government in the process of negotiating with kidnappers. However, there is the need to critically have a rethink about the usage of money to rescue hostages. The issue is to amplify the voices of prevention of the worst alternative dimensions to raise awareness about their powerlessness in the face of kidnappings; influence social change to reduce or mitigate kidnappings; educate and improve awareness on the subject and associated problems in society; and help develop policies to end kidnappings. This section contributes to the current discourse and fight against kidnappings not only in Nigeria but also in the world based on the usage of money/cash for ransom purposes. The question is: should the Nigerian government pay a ransom for the freedom of hostages from the clutches of kidnappers? As a result, kidnappers have killed many victims. Kidnapping is a complex risk that has affected Nigerian societies and individuals. It is a cruel crime, not only for the innocent kidnapped, but also for the relatives (Osuntokun, 2020). Many innocent people continue to struggle with the psychological consequences long after their release. It is a scenario that demands rapid intervention that can often determine the successful release of kidnapping victims, as well as limiting the damage that kidnapping and ransom can cause both to individuals and to the government. When the country conducts negotiations in the shadow of kidnapping, exercising the bargaining dimension poses certain unique and future challenges (Oyewole, 2016a, 2016b). Maintaining relationships with kidnappers, who ignore human rights or other national norms, for example, raises concerns that the country is helping to legitimize practices that are otherwise strongly condemned. However, as some scholars have argued, there may be an obligation to negotiate with kidnappers when it comes to serious security concerns (Oyewole, 2016a, 2016b). How do worst alternatives to the bargaining dimension impact the moral considerations involved in dealing with kidnappers?

Like any other criminal networks, they come in different forms, from political kidnappings to criminal kidnapping networks. These actions are often collectively referred to as “kidnapping,” a term for which there is no academic consensus and which, it has been argued, hampers prospects for bargaining dimensions and encourages entrenched kidnapping. Do the dimensions of bargaining with the kidnappers, through official state channels or otherwise, undermine the national order by conferring a legitimacy and authority traditionally bestowed only on the Nigerian state? How should the Nigerian state balance the risks of attributing legitimacy to unsavory groups against the possibility of an escalation of kidnappings stemming from the refusal to negotiate? When faced with kidnappers, the government always insists that they will not negotiate, but in practice exceptions abound (Campbell, 2020; Munshi, 2021; McLaughlin, 2021). Recently, the present administration has indicated that it will no longer prevent victims’ families from paying ransoms to kidnappers, even though the government will not pay ransoms or enter into negotiations). The main people at risk of becoming victims of kidnapping in the country are innocent families and business travelers. While the path of negotiation will always be the

safest, a successful liberation is driven by negotiations. In the next section, this chapter addresses these issues and controversy in pursuing worst alternative of negotiation can generate between the government and the victims after rescuing the kidnappers in a different situation.

Ransom Payment Mechanism for Hostages: A Point of Controversy Between the Victims of Kidnapping and Government

This section analyzes the argument against the government mechanism of making ransom payment to kidnappers in the process of negotiating for the rescue or the release of their victims. It has observed that refusing to pay for ransom of victim does not really appear to reduce the likelihood of victims being kidnapped in the country. In other words, making payment to set victims free from the clutches of kidnappers has neither reduced nor solved the main problem of kidnapping in Nigeria. There is no clear link between the government's mechanism of ransom payment and the number of people who perpetually fall victim to kidnapping (Campbell, 2020). Instead, Campbell (2020) noted that kidnapping activities in Nigeria are motivated by the socio-economic and political conditions of the country. This implies that kidnapping operations in Nigeria are generally undertaken as a business venture. These forms of illegal commercial activity in the country leverage on the vulnerability of innocent individuals who are unfortunately held as hostages for profit making purposes.

For Campbell and other scholars, the point is that the government willing to make a ransom payment for a victim tended to bring its victims home alive, while the government refusal to pay saw its citizens being killed in majority of cases (Campbell, 2020; Munshi, 2021; McLaughlin, 2021). This is one of the reasons why taking a public position of government and not negotiating with the kidnappers is a terrible maneuver of openness. Even though the government has no intention of paying a ransom, there is no reason to mention it. In citing different cases from the government and the victims, they showed different forms of ordeal of rescue operation mechanism based on secrecy:

Citing case 1: State Governments must review their policy of rewarding bandits with money and vehicles. Such a policy has the potential to backfire with disastrous consequences. States and Local Governments must also play their part by being proactive in improving security in & around schools.¹

Citing case 2: Minister of Information and Culture Lai Mohammed told a news conference in the nation's capital city Abuja that they were released unconditionally by their abductors. No money exchanged hands in the course of negotiation for the release of the boys, the

¹Muhammadu Buhari on Twitter, February 26, 2021 <https://twitter.com/mbuhari/status/136538242877406467?lang=en> (2 March 2021)

*minister told reporters, adding that the schoolboys secured their freedom without the exchange of suspected or convicted bandits in the custody of the government.*²

*Citing case 3: We are working hard to bring an end to these grim and heartbreaking incidents of kidnapping. The Military and the Police will continue to go after kidnappers. They need the support of local communities in terms of human intelligence that can help nip criminal plans in the bud.*³

Those cases stated above undermine the worth of the victims, which is all that keeps them alive and negotiations can help governments. They facilitate intelligence gathering, making it easier to plan a military rescue. Once it is recognized in certain circumstances governments always negotiate, which opens the door for everyone to work together to manage the problem with kidnappings. Governments and families of victims involved in victim recovery have a common interest in reducing the amount of the ransom. In order to limit ransom payments, governments that choose to pay should hide their involvement from kidnappers. It is an alternative means to privatize the negotiation process, which allows kidnappers to present themselves as representatives of the victim's family. If the victims make financial demands, the representatives operating within the shadow for the government can credibly claim not to speak for the government and try to push the kidnappers toward a financial resolution. Government has a clear and compelling interest in ensuring that no family negotiates directly with the kidnappers without adequate assistance. In the next case stated below, the act of kidnapping has been condemned by the narration of the government:

*Citing case 4: President Muhammadu Buhari condemned the latest kidnapping as 'inhuman and totally unacceptable'. 'This administration will not succumb to blackmail by bandits who target innocent school students in the expectations of huge ransom payments,' he said in a statement. 'Our primary objective is to get the hostages safe, alive and unharmed.'*⁴

Here we argue that removing the ban on paying kidnappers ransom would mean kidnappings would be treated the same. The government representatives would support the families of the victims and seek to negotiate a monetary settlement. However, it is illegal for individuals to pay ransom to named kidnappers, although no one has been prosecuted for doing so in Nigeria. Families would be responsible for fundraising while the government would follow the negotiations and, in some cases, provide the ransom (Munshi, 2021; McLaughlin, 2021). But in national security cases, there would be a fundamental variable. Such a system would allow governments that seek to pay to do so, without drawing attention to their involvement or increasing demands from kidnappers, this can be detected from the narrated cases below:

²Bosun, O., (2020) No ransom paid to gunmen for schoolboys' release: Nigerian gov't, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-12/19/c_139601548.htm (2 March 2021)

³Muhammadu Buhari on Twitter, <https://twitter.com/mbuhari/status/1366654534060281860>

⁴BBC News (2021) Nigeria's Zamfara school abduction: More than 300 Nigerian girls missing, BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-56188727> (2 March 2021)

Citing case 5: *The Secretary to the Katsina State Government, Mustapha Inuwa, said the state government did not pay any ransom to rescue the abducted 344 students of Government Science Secondary School, Kankara. The SSG said, "Contrary to speculations in some quarters that the government paid N1 million to rescue each student, the government did not pay any money".*⁵

Citing case 6: *It also quoted Imran Yakubu, a 17-year-old who was also abducted, as saying that the kidnappers told them "One million naira must be paid per each student...or we will recruit or kill you".*⁶

The point is kidnappings are weapons of war, and the only real way to end kidnappings is to neutralize the kidnappers' network that carries them out, whether through settlements, security, or military means. Meanwhile, a policy of no concessions is only credible if the government is prepared to let the victims die to argue that they will never give in. The government that expects its people to make this kind of sacrifice should only do so on the basis of compelling evidence that many more lives will be saved. The no-concession policy does not meet this standard, and no one should die for a policy that does not work. In fact, the negotiation has become all the more relevant and important as the victims in Nigeria now have to fight for their life. In negotiations, the concept of the worst alternative to negotiate with the kidnappers is very important. In every negotiation, the government must ask itself the question: "What is the best alternative means if this negotiation does not succeed?" The worst alternative creates a strong incentive for ransom with the kidnappers in the country.

Here, we also argue that the worst alternative to negotiating with the kidnappers is that of death. This immediately increases the value of a negotiation. However, examining the government's worst alternative would be a mistake. In any negotiation, the government must also focus on the value they create for the other side (kidnappers). While for the Nigerian government the best possible outcome for the victims is to stay alive and for the kidnappers it is important to obtain a ransom. In short, the purpose of this section is to question the validity of the narrative that government do not negotiate with kidnappers, which is quite contradictory in practice, and also to examine whether such negotiations would even be thinkable, much less possible in the context of kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria. In Nigeria, where some states indirectly push for such an outcome even though they still see the federal government as not so active in response.

⁵Premium Times (2021) Katsina govt insists no ransom paid for Kankara school boys' release-Official, Agency Report January 5, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/nwest/434937-katsina-govt-insists-no-ransom-paid-for-kankara-school-boys-release-official.html> (2 March 2021)

⁶Report: Kankara boys contradict FG, say ransom was paid for their release; Testimonies from some of the abducted Kankara boys have revealed that ransom was paid before they were freed, The Wall Street Journal is reporting, <https://www.thecable.ng/report-kankara-boys-contradict-fg-say-ransom-was-paid-for-their-release#:~:text=WSJ%20reports%20that%20one%20of,on%20motorcycles%20ready%20to%20release.%E2%80%9D> (2 March 2021)

From an academic point of view, some scholars argue that this debate is really relevant only in democratic government, as the government would have no interest in negotiating, but this contradicts the realities of Kankara students and other kidnapping cases in the country, as the government saw a dramatic change in the security structure, change in the political discourse and move to a policy position of no negotiation when it comes to kidnappers who are explicit threats to security. The argument against negotiating with kidnappers is simple. Kidnappers must never be rewarded with ransom for releasing the victims. In other words, the negotiations give illegal business to the kidnappers and their methods. Negotiation with the worst alternative can destabilize the administration of government, undermine national efforts, and set a dangerous precedent. This chapter does not dwell on the premise of the above argument for a moment, instead takes a quick look at some of the pros and cons of dealing with kidnappers, as the end goal should always be to find ways to come up with the best alternatives.

In general, negotiation is the simplest way to maintain an open dialogue with the kidnappers or their networks, understand them, and encourage them to participate in peaceful means of releasing victims without weapons. The opposite side to that, however, is that by opening the dialogue it gives them the act to continue with illegal business; hence it is better not to have any relationship until they renounce criminal acts. This shows that they voluntarily chose to continue with illegal business process. Going back to the question of whether government make dirty deals with kidnappers and, in practice, often bargain with kidnappers as the worst alternatives. It is public knowledge, for example, that the Nigerian government kept a secret medium for the kidnappers. What is clear in this argument is the disconnect between what government say publicly and what they actually do, and the problem with the rigid no-deal stance has consequently impeded any systematic and meaningful research on how best to carry out the best alternative forms of negotiation with kidnappers. Leave the following questions open for further discussion: can government pay a ransom to kidnappers without jeopardizing the integrity of its political system? What kinds of kidnappers are susceptible to ransoms and negotiations? Any dimension related or not related to the intervention?

Clearly, there is a need for a common understanding and approach on how to address security issues in the country, and so far, the Nigerian government appears to be unified on that front; but one hopes that the recent controversy of views does not derail that process. It is customary in mediation that the political sovereignty of any country is respected and, in this case, call it a diplomatic incident or otherwise ask an independent state like Nigeria to negotiate with kidnappers and pay a ransom whose agenda is to kill is very insensitive and it has been hoped that this issue will be addressed quickly and in a mature manner by the respected country called Nigeria.

Alternative Means to Combating Kidnapping Activities in Nigeria

For those who reside in Nigeria, incidences of kidnapping have become a common phenomenon with the latest in a series of kidnappings involving innocent civilians such as students, government officials, professionals, business men and women as well as clergy men. While every state in the country is often the target of such abductions, civilians in the Nigerian state are particularly candidates of exceptionality, with vulnerable individuals being taken as hostages by kidnappers against their will. To buttress this, in February 2018, not less than 110 schoolchildren were kidnapped from a boarding school in the town of Dapchi; in November 2020 (Adekunle, 2018); In December 2020, the mass kidnapping of high school children, 80 schoolchildren were abducted while returning home from a religious ceremony in Katsina (BBC News, 2020). In a report issued by Amnesty International in December 2020, “more than 1100 people were killed by bandits in northern Nigeria in the first six months of this year,” yet none of the kidnappers have been brought to justice (Deléan, 2021). Kidnapping is a threat to Nigeria’s security, which has led to the deployment of the Nigerian army to every state in the country.

Based on the statistical data analyzed by SB Morgan (2020), at least \$18.34 million was paid to kidnappers as ransom between June 2011 and March 2020 (SB Morgan, 2020). Almost \$11 million of this figure was paid between January 2016 and March 2020, indicating a very marked increase in kidnapping incidence in recent years (SB Morgan, 2020). This development points to continuous state of insecurity in the country, specifically with regard to kidnapping, the report stated. For SB Morgan (2020), kidnapping has increased in almost every state in Nigeria, and the country is becoming less safe every year. With Covid-19 pandemic associated challenges, the country might be pushed into a form of economic recession that will only lead to rising unemployment and, in turn, a desperate search for new ways to make living through the criminal act of kidnapping.

There has been a growing concern among the civilian population regarding the levels of insecurity in Nigeria, and the continuous criminal activities of kidnapping have left Nigerians enraged and doubtful of the government’s ability to protect the citizens. In recent years, kidnappings for ransom purposes are at an all-time high, while kidnappers have this route as sources of making money. Public confidence in the government effort has wavered and it is clear that the current strategy of operating in defense is ineffective.

Moreover, the Nigerian army’s strategy in fighting kidnapping has involved the creation of super-camps, a defensive movement in which large groups of soldiers gather in garrison cities, digging trenches around them and hoping to repel banditry in which some of them are kidnappers’ network, instead of the soldiers going on the offensive against kidnappers in their hiding places (Deléan, 2021). While the Military strategy works to protect the civilians, it is completely counter-productive to the goal of putting an end to kidnapping in the country as kidnapping activities directly put innocent civilians in danger. Some of these banditries are free to move

around and attack defenseless villages situated in the countryside, which is exactly where kidnapping operation often takes place (SB Morgan, 2020). In addition, their focus on the fight against banditry in the country has left many states completely vulnerable to the criminal activities of kidnappers operating within the states. While the military waiting in these super-camps, kidnapping activities have quietly spread to different communities, forming alliances and collaborating with other criminal network groups of bandits, the same ones believed to be responsible for the high school kidnappings (SB Morgan, 2020).

Furthermore, it is time for the Nigerian government to change its mechanism of negotiating with kidnappers in its effort to safe and rescue those who were taken as hostages. It is clear that responses from security agencies in Nigeria to combat kidnapping activities are not up to expectation, neither could it be said that the security apparatus in the country actually familiar themselves with the terrain of kidnappers. Although Nigeria's anti-kidnapping settings remain complex, the security agencies are perceived as a timely response to the security challenges in the country. However, Nigeria's security forces' strategy continues to prove grossly inadequate and unsuitable to stop or mitigate against the illegal activities of these criminal elements. Apart from the problems of poor funding, poor intelligence coordination, inadequate military hardware, corruption and ineffective leadership, the JTF also suffer from inadequate knowledge of the affected areas and lack of discrete surveillance networks, while weak sanction and deterrence mechanisms have created an environment in which kidnappers thrive.

Significantly, economic and political reforms must be central to Nigeria's fight against insecurity and kidnapping: development initiatives such as anti-kidnapping and poverty alleviation programs, youth employment opportunities, better training and equipment for security personnel, policies deterrence and stricter penalties for kidnappers and perpetrators, better protection and government relations with abandoned and vulnerable communities, civil-military coordination, as well as collaboration with foreign governments and non-governmental organizations would serve as alternative means of fighting kidnapping in the country and these means could also be maximized as better strategies against other criminal networks in the country. Nevertheless, it is important to state kidnapping activities across the country might require effective offensive military tactics and appropriate reforms; otherwise, the entire country might remain vulnerable to the thriving activities of kidnapping operations and their criminal networks. By and large, the outcome of the aforementioned strategies is expected to provide the federal government of Nigeria with further insights into the relationship between the military approach and the alternative approach to combat kidnapping operations in the Nigerian state.

In addition to the above, considering the proliferation of kidnapping, abduction as well as hostage taking incidents in Nigeria, there is need for the Nigerian government to develop, enhance, and promote what MCMains and Mullins (2014: 72) referred to as "best practices of hostage negotiation." This implies that besides strengthening the security mechanisms in the Nigerian state, it has equally become crucial and necessary within the Nigerian society to also enhance the professionalism of hostage negotiators. A professional hostage negotiator is a person who has a

unique body of knowledge that he or she applies to challenges associated with kidnapping, abduction as well as hostage taking incidence. It is now crucial for individuals who function within the parameters of liberating victims of kidnappers to enhance their professionalism which requires a critical consideration of their organization, performance, training, and skills so they can continue to improve their performance. Among others, MCMains and Mullins (2014: 72) refer to the following best practices of hostage negotiators:

1. Organizational issues: negotiators are a part of an organized and trained crisis management team that is recognized and supported by their agency.
2. Negotiators are selected using a standard process that is available to department personnel and consistent with a set of guidelines.
3. There should be policies in place that cover the team's mission.
4. All team members of negotiators must have successfully completed a basic negotiations course.
5. The majority of the team members of hostage negotiators must attend and update training outside the department.
6. All hostage negotiators must attend in-house training four times a year and one training is a joint exercise with tactical and command.
7. Hostage negotiating agency should have well-written procedures to be followed.
8. Hostage negotiating agency should be able to deploy at least one negotiator to handle an incident within one hour.
9. The hostage negotiating team should be able to utilize appropriate communication equipment for an incident.
10. Clear guidelines must be in place and understood in order to engage in effective and result-oriented communications with hostage takers.
11. Negotiators should be trained in interviewing skills that would allow them to gather information about person, place, and incident intelligence that can be used to plan the negotiating approach.

Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed the challenges of kidnapping in Nigeria and its associated impacts on the Nigerian state. Importantly, the chapter has queried the Nigeria's government strategy of using ransom payment as an alternative mechanism to negotiate with kidnappers and their criminal networks while undertaking rescue mission of hostages in the country. Negotiating with kidnappers in Nigeria has created the space in which obtaining a ransom through this form of negotiation has led and could further lead to the promotion of illegal business venture of kidnapping in the country. However, looking at the complexity as the opportunities expand, one can examine how the layered structure of the kidnappers can offer multiple entry points for the most awful alternative of negotiations with the federal government. In the case of the federal government, lax national ties to the kidnapper's hard core can be

seen as an advantage that allows the worst negotiations at the national level to continue despite the opposition of his group leader to the discussion. This chapter has also questioned the policy of silencing the payment of the ransom and the controversy between the government and the victims as a result of the ransom for being released. This chapter further argued that engaging with kidnappers through negotiations can potentially reverse the best alternative process, creating instead a negotiation, including the most awful alternative. Rather than weakening the ransom payment standard through the most awful alternative process, the chapter has argued that this may lead to its strengthening. Therefore, negotiations through the best alternatives are not only possible, but potentially less destructive than most of the other responses to kidnapping that are envisioned by academics and policymakers today and ultimately can offer a path of empowerment for the norm of nonviolent political challenge.

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Chapter 18

Journalism Practice in an Era of Hostage Taking: Media Coverage of Kidnappings in Nigeria



Chika Euphemia Asogwa

Abstract The media are important stakeholders in every society. They need to keep vigil of the society, analyze subjects of interest, and draw the attention of the general public and the government to the implications of the issues reported. In the process, the media can recommend preventive measures with the overall aim of making the society a better place. Concerning kidnapping, the media in Nigeria have a responsibility of reporting the issue in a manner that draws public attention to it while also assisting in combating the threat. Despite this, literature on media coverage of kidnapping issues is still at the growing stage. It is against this background that this chapter examines how the Nigerian media report kidnapping stories. The general objective of the chapter is to ascertain media coverage of kidnapping in Nigeria. The specific objectives are: to determine the sources of media stories on kidnapping in Nigeria; to ascertain the category of kidnap stories most reported in the media and to ascertain the key issues about kidnapping as reported in selected media.

Introduction

Although man typically desires a situation where everything is in perfect order, everyone knows what is good and what is bad. People avoid what is bad and focus on what is good. Within the context of sociology, when everything is in order, where everybody does what he or she is supposed to do, it is called a state of equilibrium (Gómez-Diago, 2020). That situation is hardly possible in a society, which is usually faced with different challenges. Unexpected occurrences such as killing, kidnapping, armed robbery, among other anti-social incidents usually occur. The mass media of communication have a role to play in reporting events in the society. This is done through what is called surveillance.

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The basic requirement of the surveillance responsibility of the mass media is to watch over the society and report happenings in manners that assist the society to resolve problems. Gever and Ezeah (2020) opine that the surveillance role of the media calls for constant monitoring of the society in order to draw public attention to issues of public interest. It is essential to highlight here that the media can perform the surveillance function in two broad ways. The first one is to report warning signs of pending dangers such as breakdown in security, natural disasters, among others. The second one is to report happenings that have impact on the society. On the surveillance responsibility of the mass media, Donohue et al. (2012) note that knowledge is an important requirement which people need to take informed decision. This assertion makes a strong case for media workers to constantly monitor the society and provide relevant and sufficient information to members of the general public (Gever & Ezeah, 2020). Within the context of this study, the media have a responsibility to report issues related to kidnapping and other anti-social activities. In doing so, the media can focus attention to kidnapping stories, how to avoid being kidnapped as well as measures to be taken to address the menace of kidnapping in Nigeria.

Over the years, researchers have examined how the media in Nigeria performed their surveillance role. For example, Gever and Coleman (2017) carried out a study to determine how the media perform their surveillance function within the context of conflict. Their results showed that the conflict between farmers and herdsmen only appear in the media when it is happening. As soon as the conflict reduces, media reports often cease, given how public debate, warning sign and news about the subject disappears in the media. Accordingly, Gever and Coleman concluded that the media in Nigeria did not sufficiently set agenda on issues related to the conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria. Udeze and Chukwuma (2013) did a study with the objective to determine public perception of how the broadcast media in Nigeria have fulfilled their surveillance role to the society. Their results showed that the public perceive media performance as below expectations. Generally, the media are very important stakeholders in every society. They need to keep vigil of the society, analyze them, and draw the attention of the public and the government on the implications of the issues reported. In the process, the media can recommend preventive measures. The overall aim is to make the society a better place. Concerning kidnapping, the media in Nigeria have a responsibility of reporting the issue in a manner that draws public attention to it while also assisting in combating the issue. Despite this, literature on media coverage of kidnapping issues is still at the growing stage. It is against this background that this chapter examined how the Nigerian media report kidnapping stories. Therefore, the general objective of the chapter is to ascertain media coverage of kidnapping in Nigeria. The specific objectives are: to determine the sources of media stories on kidnapping in Nigeria; to ascertain the kidnapping category most reported in the media; and to ascertain the key issues about kidnapping as reported in the selected media.

Conceptual Framework of Kidnapping in Nigeria

Kidnapping describes an act where a person is held hostage contrary to his or her wish. Okoli and Agada (2014) define kidnapping as the taking away of someone against his will with the objective of holding him in an illegal confinement so as to elicit a ransom, or in furtherance of another crime. According to Thomas and Nta (2009) kidnapping is a robbery of the highest rank. In their view, kidnapping is an organized and systematic robbery that is not as deadly as armed robbery, but more profitable than the former. It can be argued that kidnapping is also deadly as armed robbery because there is the possibility that people could die in the hands of their captors. It is also possible that an armed robbery event could take place without anybody being killed. Therefore, the views of Thomas and Nta (2009) regarding kidnapping not being as deadly as armed robbery are subject to argument. Asuquo (2009) and Ibitoye and Bello (2023) note that it is largely because kidnapping yields high returns that the menace has continued to persist in parts of Nigeria. Nwaorah (2009) sees kidnapping as an act of an angry man who desires to take any person of value hostage, and who could be rescued by loved ones. According to Ogabido (2009) “kidnapping” explains abduction, capturing, carrying off, removing, or stealing away a person(s) for financial or other gratifications.

Kidnapping has some elements. Okoli and Agada (2014) note that for a situation to be qualified as kidnapping, there has to be three basic components. The first one is such a person must be taken away contrary to his or her consent. In the second place, a person must be confined to an illegal area and finally, the victim will be extorted; although this last point may not be in all cases. It is essential to note here that in the case of extortion, it can be financially or in any other way. It can also come from the victim, the government or the victims’ relations or group. For example, when insurgents kidnap school children, the ransom may be paid by the government. Also, a person can be kidnapped by his or her political opponents with a view to coercing him or her to step down in contesting for a political office.

Kidnapping can be caused by different factors that range from growing unemployment, political rivalry, rising poverty, among others. Ibrahim and Mukhtar (2017) attributed kidnapping in Nigeria to militant group in the Niger Delta, the Boko Haram insurgency in parts of Northern Nigeria as well as corruption among government officials. Although the classification of Ibrahim and Mukhtar is not exhaustive, it offers useful information regarding activities of groups that promote kidnapping in Nigeria. Kidnapping has negative impact on the Nigerian society. Ibrahim and Mukhtar (2017) list the negative impact of kidnapping to include financial victimization, rape and even death of the victims. Okoli and Agada (2014) aver that the consequences of kidnapping include negative impact on economic advancement, negative perception about Nigeria with a corresponding reduction in direct foreign investment. It creates an atmosphere of public insecurity, with a corresponding negative economic consequence. In summary, kidnapping has negative impact on the economy as well as the psyche of the victims. Oyewole (2016a) carried out a study wherein he ascertained the fate of hostages captured in Nigeria’s conflict

theaters, such as the Niger Delta region and the northern region of the country. The researcher focused attention on the variations in the fates of hostages in Niger Delta and Northern Nigeria. The researcher reported that many hostages lost their lives in the hands of their captors while some have sustained varying degrees of injuries. Additionally, Oyewole (2016a) reported that hostages have experienced different levels of maltreatment with a corresponding negative impact on their psyche.

Nigeria faces the problem of kidnapping. Almost on a daily basis, cases of kidnapping appear in the media. One singular kidnap instance that attracted global attention is the abduction of over 200 secondary school students from Chibok in 2014, thus leading to *#bringbackourgirls* campaign. Different groups and individuals added their voices to the Chibok issue such that it even featured prominently during the 2015 general election in the country. According to Oyewole (2016b) notes the motivation to rescue the Chibok girls was very high, hence the Nigerian military intensified efforts aimed at securing their freedom. Oyewole adds that Boko Haram threatened to kill the children and military made efforts to rescue them. Recently, mass kidnapping of school children has continued to define national discourse in Nigeria. These instances have taken place in states like Zamfara, Niger, Kaduna, among others. Inyang and Abraham (2013) carried out a study to determine why kidnapping has continued to persist in Nigeria. The researchers made use of survey research design with the questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The result of the study showed that absence of a legal framework to combat kidnapping was one of the reasons the problem has continued to linger in Nigeria. It is important to clarify here that other categories of kidnapping include ritual, trafficking, etc.

The Media and Insecurity in Nigeria

The media have critical roles to play in times of security challenges such as Nigeria which is currently experiencing. This is because the media have the capacity to provide relevant information that will educate the general public about insecurity while also championing solutions. El-Nawawy and Shawn (2010) affirm that the media can calm down conflicts in the following ways: covering stories of injustice, acknowledging mistakes in journalistic coverage where there is the need, providing a public place for groups that are underrepresented politically, providing multiple viewpoints on a diversity of controversial issues; demonstrating willingness toward addressing conflicts and not escalating conflicts; avoiding the utilization of demonizing labels, like terrorist or extremist, except they are attributed to a reliable source; avoiding views that do not have credible sources. This position prioritizes the role of source in media coverage of conflict situations.

The source is an important consideration in media coverage. This is because the source plays a fundamental role in determining the direction of media reports. Gans (1979, p. 117) comments on the relationship between media and their sources thus: “while sources attempt to ‘manage’ the news, putting the best light on themselves,

journalists concurrently ‘manage’ the sources in order to extract the information they want.” In the process of such a competing interest, categories may emerge. Studies have shown that the source plays a fundamental role in determining media contents (e.g., Ayodele, 2021; Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Fahmy, 2005). For instance, Takahashi (2011) investigated mass media coverage of climate change in Peru and found that the sources cited were mostly government, thus giving little or no room for opposing voices.

The source of media messages can be categorized in different ways. Stack (2013) says that the most obvious distinction between source types is that between “official” and “non-official” sources. Sigal (1994) investigated articles from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* and classified channels of information into three categories: routine, informal, and enterprise. Wittebols (1995) compared terror sourcing practices between US and Canadian TV networks, also in the late 1980s. Based on a nine-week sample in which the stories selected reflected topics dealing with different kinds of terror, he concluded that official sources make up 60% of all sources for networks in both countries and are quoted for longer periods than non-official sources. Hallin, Manoff, and Weddle (1993) say that the reliance on official sources in the context of national security issues is “one of the most consistently replicated findings in American journalism.”

Media coverage of kidnapping has received attention in literature. Nwabuzor (2019) examined media framing of Boko Haram kidnappings in Nigeria, where two national newspapers—*the Vanguard* and *the Punch*—and two TV stations—NTA and Channels—were sampled for the study. A total of 351 stories on Boko Haram abduction from four media outfits were extracted for content analysis. The study found that most of the stories on Boko Haram abductions cited official sources. It was also found that a significant correlation exists between story sources and frames used.

Okanachi (2015) carried out a similar study on media coverage of the Bring Back Our Girls’ protests. The study analyzed content of the coverage of the protests by the *Daily Sun* and the *Daily Trust* with specific attention to frequency, prominence, and direction/slanting. Using agenda setting and frustration aggression as theoretical bases, findings revealed high frequency of coverage, low prominence, and favorable direction of coverage. The critical point to note is that the mass media of communication occupy a role in disseminating information on criminal and conflict situations, including cases of kidnapping.

Theoretical Framework

Agenda setting theory was utilized to examine how the media in Nigeria report kidnapping. The origin of agenda setting theory can be traced to the 1920s, when the power of the media to determine the direction of public opinion and policy became a major subject of academic debate. In his 1922’s book titled *Public Opinion*, Walter Lippmann argued that the media have the capacity to determine the

images in our heads. He noted that the media make available information that serve as a guide for people to think and act, hence, the media are responsible for the pictures in our head. Lippmann had attributed the images in the minds of the public to media contents. One of the popular arguments regarding agenda setting theory is attributed to Cohen (1963, p. 13), who notes that “media may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.” Cohen was in obvious agreement with Lippmann regarding the power of the media in determining public agenda. It is essential to note that the actual postulation of agenda setting as a theory took place in 1972, when Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw studied voters in Chapel Hill (McCombs 1993, 2004, 2005; McCombs & Shaw, 1974). Based on the result of their study, Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw noted:

In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position.

It is instructive to note that the theory was largely developed based on the studies conducted in the United States of America. In order to determine the relevance of the theory and the applicability of its postulations in a Nigerian setting, Gever (2015) examined a sample of 400 respondents to ascertain the extent that media set agenda in the country’s politics. Survey research design was used with questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. Descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze the results for the study. The results of the study showed that the media in Nigeria actually set agenda for the Nigerian public space. The implication here is that the theory is relevant to a Nigerian setting. Within the context of this study, it can be said that the media in Nigeria has the ability to set agenda on the increasing cases of kidnapping in the country.

Methodology

This chapter employs quantitative content analysis to examine how the media in Nigeria report stories on kidnapping. Content analysis is regarded most suitable for the purpose of this chapter because of its appropriate design for a research that wishes to survey documented contents such as books, journals, newspapers, television, films, among others. Therefore, quantitative content analysis allows this chapter to determine how the media in Nigeria report the issues of kidnapping.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

For this study, the sample size was made up of two TV stations and two newspapers. The TV stations were Channels television and Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). The newspapers were *The Guardian* and the *Nation* newspapers. The advantage of combining both TV and newspaper is that it allows researcher to compare the result across different media genres as well as generate more reliable findings. The research made use of stratified and simple random sampling techniques for the study. Therefore, the research first stratified the media into electronic and print media. This was to allow for equal representation of media in the sample. Furthermore, the research randomly sampled Channels television and NTA to represent electronic media while *The Guardian* and *Nation* newspapers were sampled to represent print media. The third level of the sampling process was for story selection. At this stage, the research utilized motif sampling procedure to select stories on kidnapping from the media selected. By its very nature, motif sampling involved using keywords to select stories on the websites of the selected media. The keywords utilized include “kidnapping,” “abduction,” “hostage taking,” “kidnapped,” “abductors,” and “ransom.”

The duration for the study was January 1, 2017 to December 30, 2020. The researcher considered this duration appropriate to understand how the media report kidnapping issues for a time frame of 3 years.

Measurements Used

This research made use of the following variables:

Sources of stories: The attention here was to determine the actors that are cited in media stories on kidnapping. Therefore, the following sources were used:

Official sources: These are stories that are attributed to those in position of authorities such as government officials, security personnel, etc.

Non-official sources: These are stories that are attributed to those who are not in power. Examples here include victims of kidnapping, family members, public affairs analysts, etc.

Kidnap category: The main attention here was to determine the kidnap classifications that were most reported in the media. The following classifications were used:

1. **Political motivated kidnap:** Kidnap that is targeted at political opponents.
2. **Terrorism-related kidnap:** Kidnap that is attributed to terrorist groups like Boko Haram.
3. **Kidnap for ransom:** Kidnap for money as a business.
4. **Banditry kidnapping:** Kidnap by bandits. Kidnapping for policy concession.

Key issues reported: The attention of this measure was to determine issues about the kidnapping that most dominated the media. Therefore, the following were examined:

- (a) Kidnap cases
- (b) Death of victims
- (c) Prevention of kidnapping
- (d) Negotiation with kidnappers
- (e) Ransom payment

Unit of Analysis and Instrument of Data Collection

Articles such as editorials, letters-to-the-editor, opinion that were published in the selected media constituted the unit of analysis for this study. The code sheet served as the instrument for data collection. The choice of a code sheet was because it is most suitable for content analysis studies. The inter-coder reliability of the instrument was partially determined through triangulation of investigator, which involved the use of two coders who coded 20% of the sampled stories. Thereafter, Krippendorff's Alpha (KALPHA) was utilized to determine the inter-coder reliability of the data with the application of SPSS 22 version. The analysis shows inter-coder reliability of 0.81 for story source, 0.77 for kidnap category, and 0.75 for key issues. This means that the instrument was reliable. It is against this background that descriptive statistics was employed to analyze the data, which are largely presented in simple percentages and charts.

Results

The research examined the stories on kidnapping from the four media selected for the study. After the search, a total of 331 stories on kidnapping were generated. The researcher then evaluated stories that were generated and the analysis is presented in the following charts.

The aim of computing the chart (Fig. 18.1) was to determine the distribution of stories on kidnapping based on the four media that were examined. It was found that *the Guardian* newspaper had the highest number of stories followed by the *Nation*, Channels, and NTA in that order. Cumulatively, newspapers accounted for 65% of the stories. The implication here is that newspapers gave more attention in terms of stories on kidnapping than television. The researcher then took another step by examining the sources cited in media stories on kidnapping. The result is presented in Fig. 18.2.

The objective of plotting the chart above was to determine the sources that were mostly cited in media stories on kidnapping in Nigeria. The result of the study

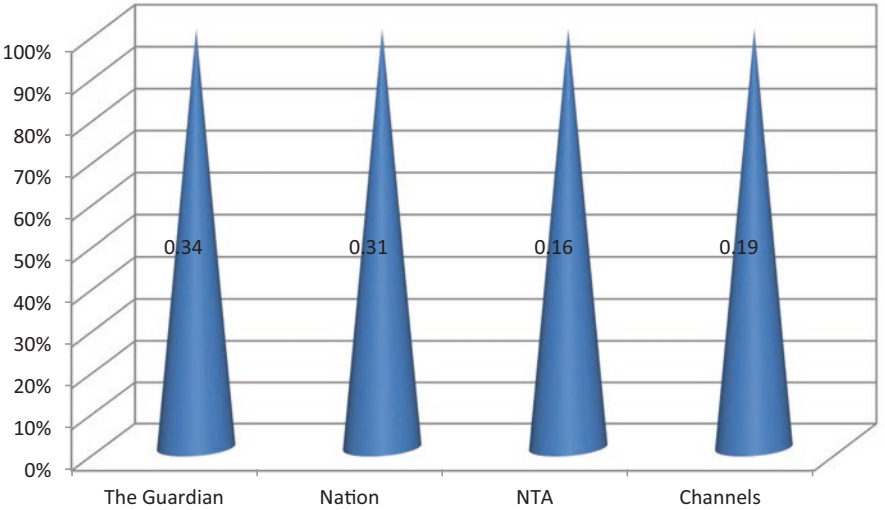


Fig. 18.1 Distribution of stories according to media

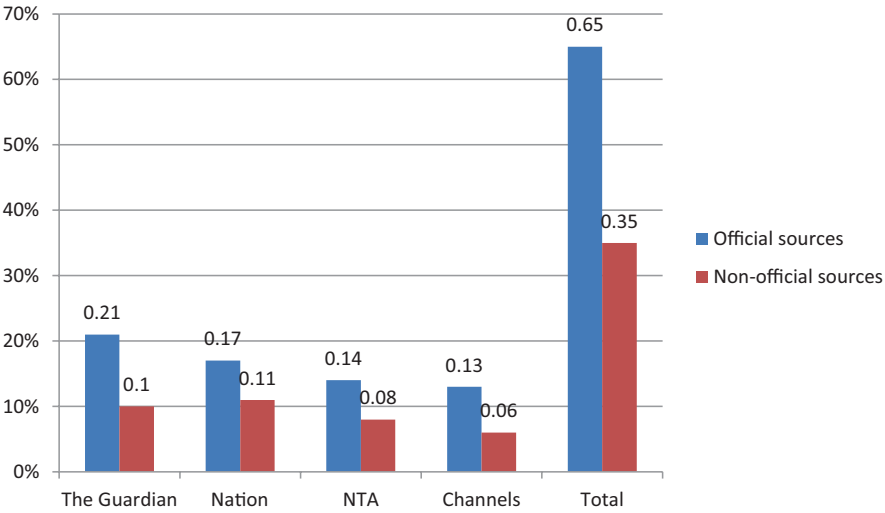


Fig. 18.2 Sources of stories on kidnapping

showed that generally, there were more official sources cited across the media than non-official sources. This means that other sources were given less attention across the media examined. To ascertain the categories of kidnapping that were mostly reported in the media, the following chart was plotted (Fig. 18.3).

The aim of plotting the chart above was to determine the categories of stories on kidnapping that appear in the media in Nigeria. The result of the study showed that kidnapping for ransom appeared most in the media. This was followed by

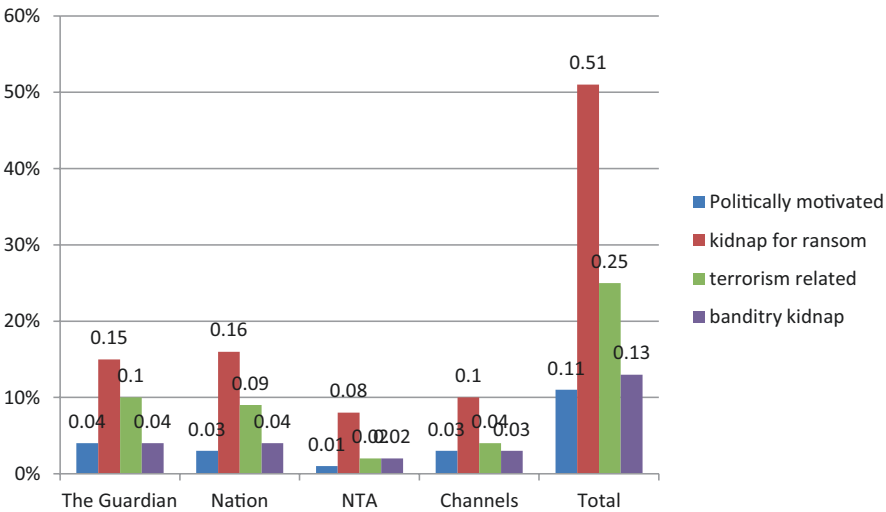


Fig. 18.3 Categories of media stories on kidnapping

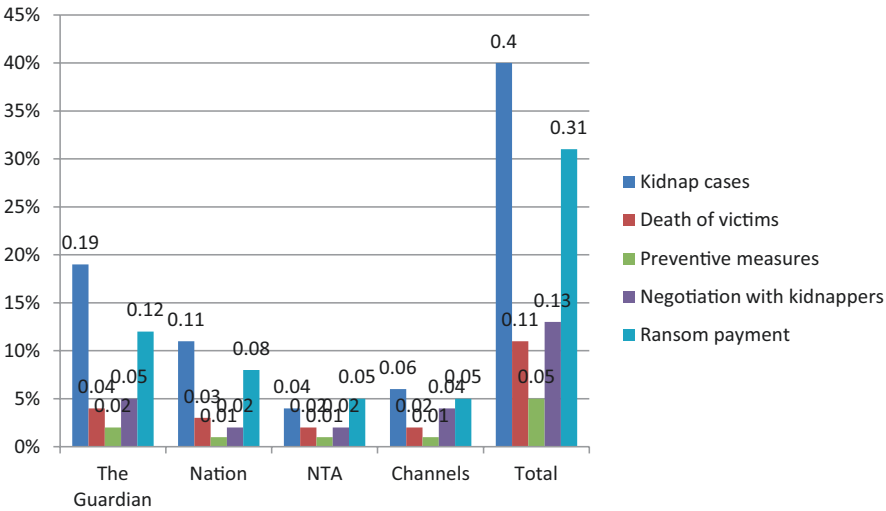


Fig. 18.4 Key issues in media stories on kidnapping

terrorism-related kidnapping. Additionally, it was found that politically motivated was the least that appeared in the media. To determine the key issues about kidnapping that are reported in the media, the following chart was plotted.

In Fig. 18.4, the researcher ascertained the key issues about kidnapping as reported in the selected media. The results of the study showed that kidnap cases dominated the issues that are reported about kidnapping in the media. This is followed by ransom payment. On the other hand, issues on prevention received less

attention in the media. This means that the media examined did little in highlighting preventive measures against kidnapping in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined media coverage of kidnapping in Nigeria. The study was guided by three objectives. In the first objective, the researchers examined the sources of media stories on kidnapping in Nigeria. The result of the study showed that the media examined made use of mainly official sources to report kidnapping stories. The implication here is that stories on kidnapping in Nigeria media do not allow for a diversity of sources. The use of official sources does not give room for the expression of different views on kidnapping issues. The negative implication of the use of official sources is that it does not give room for the diversity of sources while the positive implication is that it allows readers to understand the official position on the issues reported. This result is similar to those of Takahashi (2011), Stack (2013), and Hallin et al. (1993) who found that media sources of stories on conflict-related issues are largely official. Depending on official sources implies that media contents on kidnapping will be reported largely from an official position. This is because evidence in literature (Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Fahmy, 2005) showed that the sources of media stories play a significant role in determining media contents.

In the second objective, the researcher ascertained the kidnapping category most reported in the media. It was found that kidnapping for ransom was the most reported category of kidnapping that was reported in the media. The negative implication here is that it looks as though ransom was the only reason fuelling kidnapping while the positive implication is that people will be guided on the centrality of payment of ransom in promoting kidnapping. This aspect of the study has extended arguments in literature as previous studies (Okpanachi 2015; Nwabuzor 2019) on media coverage of kidnapping hardly pay attention to the category of kidnapping reported. Instead, these studies mainly looked at measures like frequency of coverage, direction as well as prominent of coverage. Therefore, by looking at the categories of kidnapping reported, this study has added a fresh perspective to the study of media coverage of kidnapping in Nigeria. The reason for the media paying more attention to kidnapping for ransom could be a result of the declining terrorist attacks in the country. Onuoha and Oyewole (2018) say that there is a decline in Boko Haram attacks but kidnapping for ransom is on the increase.

Finally, the researcher examined the key issues about kidnapping as reported in the selected media. The result of the study showed that kidnap cases dominated the key issues that are reported in the media about kidnapping. Other issues such as preventive measures received less attention in media stories on kidnapping. This result point to the fact that the media examined did not set agenda on how to prevent kidnapping in Nigeria. Researchers (Gever 2015; McCombs 1993, 2004, 2005; McCombs & Shaw, 1974) argue that the media have the ability to set agenda for the general public. However, the results of the current study showed that the media

examined did not set agenda on how to address the problem of kidnapping in Nigeria. Instead, attention was focused mainly on kidnap cases as well as payment of ransom. This type of reporting may not necessarily contribute in addressing the core issue. The negative implication here is that less attention will be paid to prevention of kidnapping while greater attention will be paid to rescue of victims.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, this chapter concludes that the media in Nigeria in reporting kidnapping cases pay attention largely to official sources with less attention paid to non-official sources. It is equally the conclusion of this study that the media in Nigeria pay greater attention to confirmed cases of kidnapping with little or no attention paid to preventive measures of kidnapping. This study has three implications. First, the study has implications on theory of agenda setting by revealing how the Nigerian media report kidnapping issues. This information could prove beneficial in strengthening arguments on media agenda setting in Nigeria within the context of security issues. In the second place, this study has implications on existing literature on media coverage of kidnapping. This is because the study has added a fresh perspective regarding media reportage of kidnapping by looking at the categories of kidnapping as well as the key issues about kidnapping that are reported in the media. These aspects are hardly considered in previous literature. Finally, this study has implications on media coverage of kidnapping. The results of the current study could serve as a useful guide for journalists reporting kidnapping in Nigeria. Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made. First, journalists reporting kidnapping stories should pay greater attention to preventive measures of kidnapping and not only cases of kidnapping. This information is needed as a way of addressing the lingering problem of kidnapping in Nigeria. Finally, it is recommended that further studies should be expanded to include challenges journalists face in reporting kidnapping.

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Chapter 19

Concluding Reflections: On the Political Economy of Kidnapping in Nigeria



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Abstract This chapter provides a concluding reflection on the causes, trend, forms, spatial distribution, actors, strategies and consequences of kidnapping in Nigeria, as well as measures to control it and their effectiveness. It is against this background that this chapter draws conclusion on the state of the nation in relation to political economy of kidnapping and examines the feasibility of kidnap-free Nigeria with predictive possibilities and prescriptive policy actions for positive future.

Historical Insights

Many observers of Nigeria's affairs have continued to wonder how the security situation in the country degenerated to the current state of normalising kidnapping. As shown in this volume (especially Chaps. 3, 9 and 11), kidnapping in Nigeria has its origin in the precolonial era, and its endured colonialism to become one of the leading post-colonial threats for the country and its neighbours. For centuries before colonialism, kidnapping was one of the major means of recruiting victims of ritual killing and slave trade (across the Sahel and Atlantic) in the territory that make up modern day Nigeria and beyond. The colonial policy against ritual killing and slave trade considerably minimised the threats of kidnapping, pushing the act from public domain to the underworld. The threat of kidnapping re-emerged from the underworld to become an object of public protest in Nigeria, as it was employed for both

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tactical and strategic advantages in oil-related insurgency in the Niger Delta from early 2000s and the Islamist militancy in the Lake Chad region from early 2010s. Amidst these, some cases of kidnapping by the ruling class and bandits have significantly retained the threat in public consciousness, while publicity has endured or grew for underworld cases that involved ritualists, pirates, fraudsters, baby factories and human traffickers. These have made Nigeria a leading hotspot in the global map of kidnapping and related crimes.

Geography of Kidnapping

Kidnapping in Nigeria is national in outlook, affecting all geopolitical zones of the country. However, while some forms of kidnapping occur nationwide, cutting across all parts of the country, there are some other forms that are peculiar to certain regions. Although some parts or states of the federation are more affected than the other, there is no save place from kidnapping by ritualists, fraudsters, traffickers and politicians in Nigeria (see Chaps. 2, 9, 10 and 11). Notably, however, major cities with high media attention tend to dominate public attention in consideration and discourse on threats of these forms of kidnapping. This explains the prominence of Lagos, Ibadan, Benin, Onitsha, Aba, Port Harcourt, and Abuja among others in the Southern and North-central part of the country in this consideration. In addition, kidnapping by insurgents, terrorists, militants and pirates are defined by geography. Kidnap operations of the Boko Haram insurgents and terrorists are concentrated in the Lake Chad region (see Chap. 6), while that of oil militants are concentrated in the Niger Delta (see Chap. 5). The Nigerian pirates operate in the coastal region of the south and the Gulf of Guinea (see Chap. 13). The only exception to the geographical delineation is the kidnapping for ransom and by bandits (see Chaps. 2, 7 and 8). Bandits operate almost everywhere in Nigeria, although sophisticated organisations and campaigns of armed banditry are mostly concentrated in the North-West and North-Central.

Actors and Strategies

Kidnapping is mostly if not exclusively carried out by non-state actors. These include terrorists, armed bandits, pirates, militants, insurgents, politicians, human traffickers, ritualists, baby factories and scammers. These actors perpetuate this crime deploying different strategies, some of which are unique to the specific form of kidnapping under consideration. As this book illustrates across chapters, kidnapping generally involves forceful seizure, relocation and detention of a person for political, social and/or economic reasons. However, kidnapping by fraudsters often involves deceitful schemes with attractive offers to lure potential victims to capture's den, with little or no coercion of abduction (see Chap. 2). Although this strategy is unique to scammers, it is sometimes adopted by other actors. For instance,

Boko Haram insurgents dressed and pretended to be troops with military trucks, when they adopted Chibok girls in 2014 and Dapchi girls in 2018. As evident in Chap. 9, the use of charm to hypnotise targets at the points of capture, relocation and detention is a unique strategy in kidnapping by ritualists, although other actors may integrate element of this strategy into their operation. Again, ritualists have unique tactical objective to kill, dismember, maim, deform or impoverish their captors. Baby factories also have unique strategic objective to impregnate kidnap victims and compel them to bear baby for their enterprises (see Chap. 10). Boko Haram insurgents similarly kidnap young girls and women to reward members as sex slaves or wives, who are impregnated and compelled to bear children, in order to deepen the bond between the captors and captives and ensure generational transition of their campaigns (see Chaps. 6 and 12). Although kidnapping by bandits tends to be exclusively motivated by ransom, other actors also consider ransom as an object of bargaining to advance organisational, tactical or strategic interests (see Chaps. 2, 7, 8, 14 and 17).

Triggers and Accelerators

The concern for why kidnapping exists and why its threat endures in Nigeria cannot be ignored by observers. Kidnapping is deeply rooted in the paradox of Nigeria's political economy, making it a recurring phenomenon across time and space. The rise of individualism, commodification of lives, sanctity of human sacrifice, struggle for power, glorification of conquest and subservient trade relations with Arabs and European slave merchants encouraged kidnapping in many precolonial states that made up Nigeria (see Chap. 3). Although colonialism suppressed human sacrifice, slave trade, internal wars and redefined struggle for power and commodification of lives, it promotes individualism that sustains kidnapping as underworld enterprise. However, the failure of post-colonial state to promote human welfare and security coupled with heightened individualism, ritualism, commodification of lives and power struggle has revived kidnapping in Nigeria as an object of political protest or self-service and socioeconomic survival amidst allied crimes, such as ransoming, trafficking, baby factory and ritual killing (see Chaps. 1, 2, and 4). Accordingly, kidnapping has flourished in Nigeria amidst greed and grievances, to advance strategic interests in power politics, as an instrument of class struggle, as a response to state failure, and as a result of frustration with socioeconomic conditions of individuals, group and the nation.

Consequences

Kidnapping has come at a very huge cost to both the state and society in Nigeria. For the state, kidnapping has negatively affected the national security of the country, external image of the country, foreign direct investments (FDI), economic growth

and development. As a subject of national security, kidnapping has been used by subversive elements in armed banditry, insurgency, terrorism and militancy in Nigeria (see Chaps. 5, 6 and 7). These have further shown and accelerated the weaknesses of the state to promote the welfare and security of the citizens. As evident in Chap. 14, kidnapping has had negative effects on Nigeria's image internationally, to the detriment of FDI, tourism, soft power, economic growth and foreign policy of the country. (see Chaps. 14 and 15). For the society, it has affected human development, human rights and human security. As shown in almost all the chapters of this book, the menace of kidnapping has negatively impacted fundamental human rights and human security, as it threatens rights to life, freedom of movement and fair hearing, freedom from fear, slavery and servitude, and gender equality. Accordingly, the threats of kidnapping to the people and government of Nigeria, and beyond, cannot be ignored in any consideration of national, regional and human security.

Cross-Cutting Issues

Many issues have emerged at the intersection of political economy and security discussions on kidnapping in Nigeria. Prominent among these is the gender dimension of kidnapping. On a number of occasions in the last decade, Nigeria attracted international news headlines for targeted terrorist attacks and kidnapping of young girls. Indeed, kidnapping students, especially females is prominent in the strategic engagements and communications of Boko Haram. As evident in Chap. 12, this has generated public attention for targeted kidnapping of women and children, especially females. Beyond the target or victimhood, however, the role of women and young girls has become another gender dimension of kidnapping, especially in organised terrorist and insurgent campaigns, in Nigeria and beyond. Pattern of media reportage of cases of kidnapping in Nigeria is another issue that cannot be ignored. The struggle by the state to minimise the threats of kidnapping and prosecute information warfare against organised crimes is central to many attempts and clear efforts to deny, downplay or water-down media reportage on the subject. This is evident from the insightful analysis in Chap. 18, on the variation in media coverage of cases of kidnapping and hostage taking in Nigeria.

Containment Strategies

Considering the threat of kidnapping to national and human security and development in Nigeria and beyond, one cannot ignore the efforts that have been made to contain or counter it. The threat has attracted responses from both state and non-state actors. For the state actors, the governments of Nigeria at all levels (federal, state and local) have responded to the threat. As detailed in Chap. 15, the federal government has approached the threat through legal, policing, military and political

measures with varying degrees of success. In addition, many state governments have also outlawed kidnapping, negotiated with kidnappers, paid ransom, offered amnesty and collaborated with local governments, traditional authorities and the population in community policing. Amidst these, Chap. 17 further shed more lights on hostage negotiation and political responses to kidnapping in Nigeria, while Chap. 8 reflects on ransoming. Moreover, many non-state actors, including civil society groups and pro-state armed groups, including private security firms and vigilante groups. Many civil society groups have been involved in advocacy to bring public attention and compel state to respond to cases to kidnapping in Nigeria. Furthermore, many vigilante groups have emerged to support the state security forces in responding to the threats of kidnapping in the country. Despite all these efforts, the threat of kidnapping has endured in Nigeria. Weak capacity of the state in governance and advancement of welfare of the citizens, shortage of political will, inadequate capacities of the security agencies, policy inconsistency, conflicting and competing responses, widespread poverty, inequality, youth unemployment, and cultural degeneration have undermined most state and societal efforts to contain and end the threat of kidnapping in Nigeria.

Recommendations

To address the threat of kidnapping in Nigeria, there is a need to consider and respond to its political economy and security dynamics. As a subject of security, it is important to boost the institutional capacity of state security agencies to deter and contain kidnapping and minimise or neutralise the threat. For this purpose, there is a need to improve the motivation of the personnel in different security agencies, advance their capabilities and revise their strategies of engagement. However, security response to kidnapping is only a short- and medium-term strategy. In the long term, there is a need to adopt political economy strategy to address the threat. This will require the state and the society to reflect and address the root causes and manifestations of kidnapping. In this case, accountable, democratic, effective, humane, responsible, responsive and transparent governance are essential political economy measures to address the menace. This will allow the state to advance and promote human rights, welfare, development and security. These are critical to address most of the root causes of kidnapping in Nigeria, including ungoverned spaces, bad governance, corruption, weak law enforcement, poverty, inequality, unemployment, frustration, greed, grievances, armed conflicts, anti-social traditions and cultural degeneration of the society.