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banditry, and violent crime in Nigeria: A
comprehensive analysis.**

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The modern day Consequences, Causes, and Nature of Kidnapping, Terrorism, Banditry, and violent crime in Nigeria: A comprehensive analysis.

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Date: 2023

Abstract

There have been several agitations in Nigeria, but none have degenerated into the current barbaric, horrendous, heinous, and despicable dimensions of carnage, massacres, and bloodletting orchestrated by terrorists, bandits, kidnappers, and other organized violent crime syndicates. This study takes a holistic approach using secondary data sources to examine the root causes of the modern-day prevalence of kidnapping, banditry, terrorist attacks, and other organized criminal activities in Nigeria. The study finds that unemployment, excess supply of young people, neglect of certain regions in the distribution of national wealth, lack of government visibility, lack of equal economic opportunity for all, uncontrolled influx of fire arms, poverty, and religious fanaticism contributes to the increasing rate of violent crime in Nigeria. The article finds that the nature of banditry, kidnapping, and terrorist attacks are similar, and the modes of attacks on civilian and government installations are also related. The government should thus become proactively visible throughout the nation via its security agencies and economic development agenda. Additionally, the government should educate local officials and traditional councils on contemporary methods for reporting and addressing violent groups in their communities

KEYWORDS: Terrorism, Banditry Kidnapping, Violent crimes, Herdsmen, SAT, Religion, South-East, South-South, South-West, North-East, North- central, North-west, Middle Belt.

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Introduction

The current state of insecurity in the country has presented a huge problem for the country's security architecture, which is why it requires further disclosure to address the new trend in violent criminal attacks in Nigeria. The duplication of banditry and terrorist attacks in Nigeria has not only placed a huge financial burden on fiscal policy but has also forced an increment in the national government's security expenditure, Nwangwu & Ononogbu, (2014). Attacks have taken on a national dimension because kidnapping and banditry are now occurring in every region of the country, threatening both investment and lives. Attacks take place daily in Nigeria, making this article a necessity for the country. For example, on May 8th, Anambra state police discovered a kidnapped Imo businessman dead after paying the N10 million ransom; also on May 11th, an APC presidential campaign council member was shot and killed; and on May 16th, 2023, while, gunmen operating in Plateau State kill 29 people, as reported on Punch News Online (Sulaimon, 2023; Obianeri, 2023; Abraham, 2023).

Security plays a crucial role in defining the socioeconomic condition and growth of any society. A nation's ineffectiveness in handling its internal security structures not only invites crime and chaos but also hinders growth, prosperity, collaboration, and togetherness. Peace, tolerance, and thus an improved standard of living are brought about when the appropriate authority is able to reduce crime in society, (Egbegi, *et al.*, 2018; Verwimp *et al.*, 2019). That's why, despite the challenges of COVID and the Russia-Ukraine war, the majority of industrialized nations continue to prosper and grow rapidly. This is due to the fact that no community is impervious to crime, but through policy and determination of the government it becomes seemingly impossible for crime to thrive.

Security is an important factor that informs investment destinations for investors and businesses; nothing thrives in a hostile environment, (Verwimp *et al.*, 2019; Imhonopi & Urim, 2016). This is because investing in a hostile environment will lead to a waste of national resources and investments. Governments all over the world prioritize the security of their people, properties,

and investments. This is why citizens periodically vote for leaders with the capacity to protect and defend the territorial integrity of their nations. In contrast, the Nigerian government and its security machinery have left its citizens rather confused as far as the security of their lives and properties are concerned. The recent increase in kidnappings, armed bandits, and terrorist attacks in Nigeria has resulted in numerous exterminations, killings, and destructions of property and investments, (Ojo, et al., 2023).

The ability and responsibility to guarantee security and maintain law and order are all embedded in the core responsibilities of the government. The government exists to secure lives, properties, and territorial integrity, failure in this regard defeats the very purpose of every other intervention. Simply put, security is the tripod upon which the economy, infrastructure, and development rest. The government protects its citizens both externally and internally using state security machineries and agencies. This core function has remained a mirage and a facade because of the latest multitude of mayhem unleashed upon law-abiding citizens, while the security forces look incompetent in the face of such ignominious destruction in Nigeria. Regardless of the exact nature of the crime and the intent behind it, the problem can have terrible psychological and economic consequences for any society, (Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2017).

Brief history of Nigeria

As one of the nations in the sub-Saharan region of Africa, Nigeria is endowed with both mineral and human resources. According to Worldometers (2023), Nigeria has the largest population in sub-Saharan Africa, with an estimated 225 million people. Through the cooperation of the main ethnic groups in their desire for self-governance, Nigeria regained its independence in 1960. In order to facilitate administration and foster cohesion, the newly formed Nigerian nation embraced republican federalism as its form of government in 1963. As a result, it joined the Common Wealth of Nations, an organization of independent former British colonies, (UCA 2022). According to Worldometers (2023), Nigeria's total land area is 910,770 km² and has a median age of 18.1 years, making it a country with one of the youngest populations across the globe. The country is blessed with an active and youthful population whose search for survival and wealth is unparalleled within the sub region.

This system led to the fusion of entirely different and diverse ethnic nationalities into one, making the country a densely diverse society. An amalgamation orchestrated by Governor Lord Lugard that wedded incompatible ethnic groups into matrimony that has resulted in sociological regrets, tribal resentment, ethnocentric suspicion, and national discontent, (Adangor, 2017). The acrimony and the desire to dominate, control resources, retain power, and occupy certain tangible national bureaucratic positions became the preoccupation of all federating units, (Adangor, 2017). All regions fought and jostled toothlessly to be at the helm of affairs in the new Nigeria. This power tussle led to ethnic suspicion, killings, coups, and countercoups in the country, (Egbegi, et al., 2018). This finally led to the 1967 conflict between the federal government's forces, led by Nigerian soldiers, and the Igbo's armies, commanded by the Biafra troops.

The country currently practices a three-tier administrative system used to cascade the dividends of democracy and development to the grass roots. Authority and revenue are shared between the federal government, states, and local governments. Except that the local government is supervised and micromanaged by the state government and their fate is largely determined by the state governors, who can dissolve an elected local government council without recourse to the constitutional provision. Occupying positions of authority is largely done through periodic elections; however governors deliberately ignore the conduct of elections, they appoint their stooge as a caretaker local government chairman, (Ata-Agboni, et al. (2023). At this point federal allocation will not be remitted to the local government; this action starves the local government and local dwellers of development.

Nigeria's foreign earnings are highly dependent on crude oil and are supported by the export of other raw natural resources. According to the World Bank's development indicator for 2022, Nigeria's gross domestic product is about four hundred and fifteen billion dollars. Nigeria's gross domestic product per capita in 2020 was about two thousand dollars, making it one of the lowest globally. The abundance of natural resources has not translated into economic and social prosperity for the nation because of mismanagement, corruption, and a lack of progressive leaders to position the country on the path of prosperity. Leadership has also failed miserably in transforming the available young population into economic prosperity, owing to a policy disconnect between policymakers and reality, which is exacerbated by ethnocentric sentiments and bigotry, (Egbegi, et al. 2018).

Past Government's Approach in dealing with attacks on the Nation

Dissidents' activities have, however, previously been restrained by military and security command structure operations. For example On November 20, 1999, during the tenure of Olusegun Obasanjo, he ordered the military onslaught on Odi town in Bayelsa state because of the activities of armed militants, which had badly affected the very fabric of the Nigerian economy, i.e., crude oil (Onyeji, 2019). The confrontation presented a significant risk to the economy to the extent that fracas between military personnel deployed to protect oil facilities led to the killing of soldiers. With the oil revenue shrinking because of the destruction associated with the activities of oil thieves and militants, the government invaded the town in full military power in an attempt to enforce compliance and salvage the economy.

The conduct of armed militants enraged the federal government, which unleashed a full military force on Odi town, and Odi town was decimated overnight; even domestic animals were not spared, (Nwagbara, 2023; IRIN 2001; Agesan, 2021). Whether this strategy yielded the result is subject to further discussion, but one thing was sure: when the community was raised down by the military, calm returned to the area albeit temporarily, but it introduced a pernicious twist to the menace of militancy and hostilities, (Agesan, 2021). The struggle became a show of military might and acumen against a more coordinated and deadly attacks on oil facilities and personnel by militants. The counter-attacks by the militants in an effort to claim superiority and control resources resulted in constant gun battles in the creeks of the Niger Delta.

Additionally, the Odi invasion was not the only instance in which the federal government mobilized with great force to prevent disorder and anarchy. The conflicts between the Jukun people of Benue and the Tiv people of Taraba were resolved using the same tactic, (Agbu & Zhema, 2019; Nwagbara, 2023; IRIN 2001). Also, the federal government employed the full military force in 1993 after Gen. Ibrahim Babangida annulled the results of the 1993 elections (Human Rights Watch 1993). The destruction of Fela's home, shrine, and studios, eventually leading to the death of Mrs. Ransome Kuti, Fela's mother, by the military against those termed as enemies of the state, (Olawejaju, 2018). These are examples of the military's influence in maintaining orderliness across the country. However Despite being frequently attributed to the expansion of the civil space for the airing of grievances, which was highly suppressed during the

idyllic period of military rule, (Nwangwu & Ononogbu, 2014). The federal government demonstrated that it is only capable when the political class or their economy feel threatened.

For Nigeria, the burden and challenges posed by the activities of militants, armed robbers, unknown gunmen, kidnapers, herdsmen attacks, Boko-Haram, the Islamic state of West Africa, and now, the dreaded bandits put the capacity of the state to protect its citizens under scrutiny. The failure of the Nigerian state to protect its citizens amidst the rising terror unleashed on citizens by the deadly armed groups operating within the country is an attestation that the country's leadership and security apparatus have performed abysmal in their core mandate, (Egbegi et al., 2018). The failure of the state's capacity to protect and stem out the internal terror unleashed on the citizens is attributed to corruption, leadership weakness, and inadequate military representation across the nation, (Egbegi, et. al., 2018; Ojo et. al., 2023; Ojewale 2021; Oluwole & Balogun (2022). This is what Yagboyaju & Akinola, (2019), calls a "state in crisis".

That is why there is so much rebellion and secessionist agitation across the nation, where almost all federating units have been unambiguous in their centrifugal inclinations, expressing their preparedness for succession, (Adangor, 2017). Nigeria's disintegration became a hotly debated issue among all federating entities. For example, the northern region's threat to leave the union in the 1950s, Isaac Boro's twelve-day succession that resulted in the founding of the Niger Delta Republic on February 23, 1966, and the western region made up of the Yoruba ethnic group agitating to leave the country (Aladekomo, 2021; Nwangwu, 2022). This became a critical consideration for African unity because, instead of unifying Africans, Africans were rather Balkanized along ethno-tribal lines.

With a peep into the activities of the secessionist agitators and how a political movement went from a peaceful expression of interest to total anarchy in Nigeria, and how this movement has been hijacked by unscrupulous, bloodthirsty terrorists and criminals, (Ojo, 2022). The complicity of the corrupt and weak military administration has also given rise to a new dimension of crime. Although history has offered the Nigerian state an opportunity to draw inspiration from the impact of a precarious security structure on a nation, (Justin, et. al., (2021). However, leaders have failed to learn and harness the power of diversity and resources to create a more tolerant, prosperous and viable state that respects the people and the rule of law to ensure prosperity and progress for all.

The lessons learned during the civil insurrection of January 1, 1966, in Ilesha, the chaos and slaughter of January 15, 1966, during the first military coup de tat, and the brutality of May 28, June 2, and July 29, all in 1966, have been let to fester, (Omaka. et al 2021; Uzoigwe, 2011; Venter, 2015). It is critical to state that the conditions of this catastrophe, which nearly resulted in the rapid end of the nation, have not been fully assessed and lessons learned applied to combat modern-day security threats to nationhood. Property destruction, looting, and killing that happened during that period exhibit some resemblance to modern realities, but more sophisticated techniques and weaponry have been used in recent times, making destruction more lethal.

Kidnapping in Nigeria: An existential threat

The north-west of Nigeria as well as the entire country are at existential risk of kidnapping, the worst security concern the country has recently faced, (Imhonopi & Urim, 2016). Kidnapping is one of the security challenges plaguing the nation at the moment; as a result, many lives and valuables have been lost, (Ojo, 2020). Kidnappers make the lives of their captives and the people they care about miserable by demanding an outrageous ransom to gain their release, (Oluwole, & Balogun, 2022). Kidnappings have increased significantly in Nigeria, which have triggered displacement of people and disruption of social and economic activities. In the quest to provide the ransom, many families have sold their valuables; some have lost their source of livelihood to effect the release of their relatives. Moreover, paying ransom does not even guarantee that the victim will be released unhurt, (Abdullahi, 2023).

Kidnap is derived from the two words 'kid' and 'nab." While kid literally indicates a child, nab is to steal by force, (Ngwamah, 2014; Alexander & Klein 2009). The social and economic life of Nigeria and the rest of the globe are not new to kidnapping, but its evolution has been rapid and expansionary in nature with the introduction of technology and financial reward. Globally, there have been reported cases of kidnappings, For example, the kidnapping of Colonel Charles Lindbergh's son on March 1, 1932, by German carpenter Bruno Hauptmann in return for a ransom, (Gardner LC, 2004). That is why Egwu, (2016) suggests that kidnapping is the forceful capture and detention of law-abiding citizens by organizations, individuals, or groups of people infringing on the fundamental rights of the person with an intention to extort money or cause harm to the individual.

Kidnapping is not a new concept; kidnapping is an old concept that deals with the forcible snatching and taking into captivity of minors in the olden days. These children who are kidnapped are forced into captivity and converted into domestic labor machines; some are made farm hands and others turned into sex slaves, (Alexander & Klein 2009). However, modern day trends have changed the narrative in terms of motives, procedures, and coverage. Especially in Nigeria, where the cases have become so frequent that food chains have been disrupted across the nation, this happens because farmers are afraid of going to the farms because of the fear of kidnappers in Nigeria, (Justin, et.al. 2021).

Kidnapping is defined as the abduction of a person by illegal force, being carried off through deception and holding them against their will, with a demand for ransom, (Uzorma & Nwanegbo-Ben 2014). Sophisticated human trafficking is the framework in which modern slavery occurs, and it occasionally starts with kidnapping. Additionally Inyang & Abraham, (2013) described it as "the unlawful taking, taking away, and detention of a person against that person's will. In addition, Fage, & Alabi, (2017) suggest that it is the forced or dishonest abduction of an individual or a group of individuals for objectives that encompass monetary, political, and religious objectives in the quest for supremacy. Exposing the victim's families, the nation, and the world, to absurd suffering and devastation, the reason the south-east, the Niger Delta, and the south-western area continued to see high levels of kidnappings until recently, when hostages were also been taken in the northern states of Nigeria.

The threat of kidnapping in Nigeria are surrounded by several ideas of causation; while some others contend that it is caused by factors like unemployment, resource control agitation, and religious fanaticism, others conclude that it is political, while points to 'get rich quick mentality' among the youth, (Olalekan, et al., 2018). Without regard to the motive, no man shall kidnap another and demand a ransom. The recent rise in kidnapping instances is particularly concerning. For instance, between January 1 and July 29, 2022, the nation of Nigeria saw 2,840 episodes of insecurity, resulting in at least 7,222 deaths and 3,823 kidnappings, according to Odeniyi (2022). The kidnapping of 250 students at a girls' secondary school in Chibok, Borno State, in 2014, together with several other incidents, show how kidnappings have become a prominent issue of national discussion, (Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2017). Additionally, 1,499 individuals were hurt as a

result of the numerous attacks that occurred throughout the 505 local government units in the nation, Odeniyi, (2022).

Aside the kidnapping of Chibok by Boko Haram in Nigeria's North East in 2009, there have been several kidnappings, some published and many others unreported; suffice to say that there are many more unreported occurrences of kidnapping than the reported cases, (Ibrahim & Mukhtar 2017; Okpa, et. al 2018). The kidnappers exploit the victims, using intimidation and threats to the victim's family to discourage them from reporting to the police, threatening that their captive would be killed if they did. Coupled with the failure of security authorities to safeguard lives, families prefer to obey the orders of the kidnapper than the police, whom they frequently accuse of complicity and complacency, (Sahara, 2022; Adeniyi, 2022).

The bombing and kidnapping of Kaduna train passengers, the kidnapping of passengers on commuter interstate buses across the nation, the kidnapping of foreign expatriates, politicians, pastors of churches, schoolchildren, and government appointees are the recent victims of kidnapping across the country, (Anyadike,2023; Obiezu, 2021). The menace has caused a lot of financial and psychological dissatisfaction among the citizens, with some fleeing the country, many perpetually displaced, and others killed because they could not afford to pay ransom, (Ajah, et.al.2017). There is a sense of despair, frustration, helplessness, fear, and fury among Nigerians; sometimes kidnappers have also killed their victims even after receiving payment for ransom. Since there have been reports of sizeable ransom payments, which have then been used to finance these armed groups' activities, this tactic has not solely been of a political nature.

In the past, it was the Niger Delta militants who reinvented the pervasive acts of kidnapping in the Niger Delta region of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, (Ngwama, 2014; Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2017). Under the guise of resource control, some individuals hijacked the movement and made kidnapping a central tendency of the movement. The kidnappers who operated along the oil-rich region's cricks made foreign expatriates their targets, and millions of dollars were paid to secure the release of their victims, while the security apparatus remained handicapped, ill-equipped, and complicit at some point, (Alexander & Klein 2009;). Furthermore, political or financial gain is typically the driving force behind kidnapping, forming the basis for the escalation of kidnapping

in every part of the country. Contemporary kidnappings are classified regardless of whether they come from psychological, economic, or criminal motives, (Ibrahim & Mukhtar (2017).

Kidnapping has become an 'industry' "featuring a request for money that may differ significantly and be contingent upon the kind of criminals participating and the target's socioeconomic status, (Zannoni, 2003). According to Ngwama (2014), these are the same strategies that have been employed today by terrorists, bandits, and others to terrorize and destroy lives and properties in the nation. However, while the Niger Delta kidnapped foreign national expatriates, oil vessels, and oil workers, they also destroyed crude oil pipeline, leading to explosions within the cricks. Modern day terrorism has degenerated into the destruction of lives and property, with the massive killing of poor and vulnerable Nigerians, (Ojo et. al. 2023; Oluwole, & Balogun, 2022). Overall, the use of this approach is not purely political or economical in nature because there have been instances of major ransom payments, which have then been used to support the operations of these organizations.

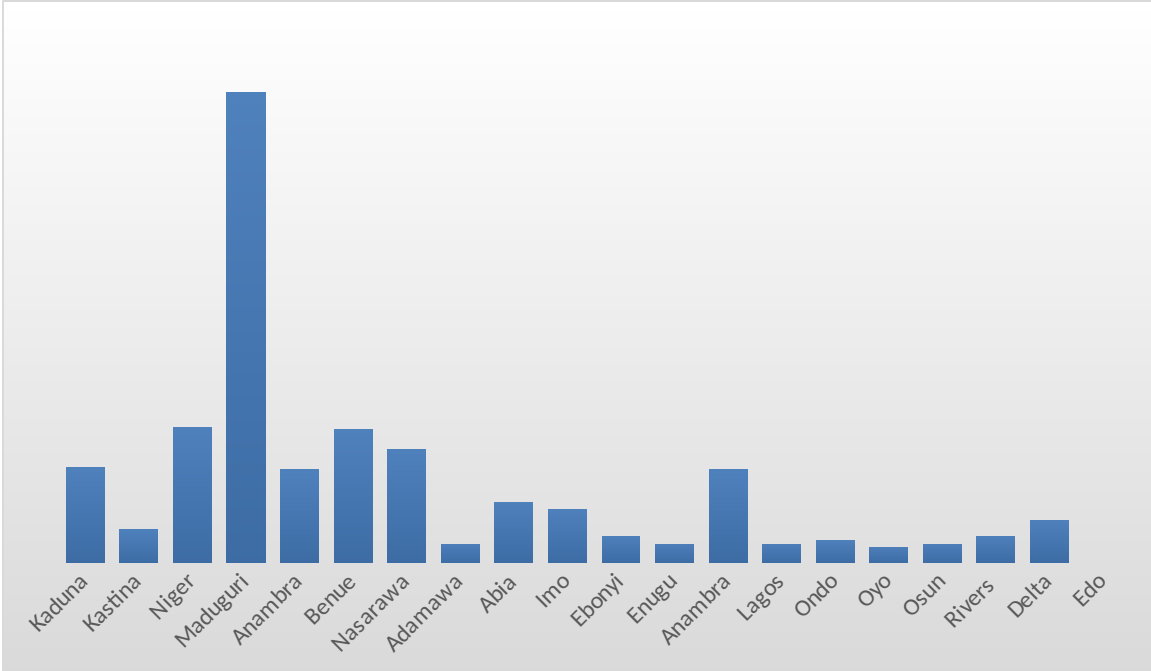
The reality now is that kidnapping has been nationalized, (Dodo, 2010). A situation where unsuspecting victims are kidnapped by a group of crooks equipped with weapons, bringing them into a quiet location to extort their relatives through the use of phone contact. When the relatives are not able to pay for the ransom, the victims are killed and their organs harvested. The terrorists have also changed their mode of operation to the extent that they round up citizens in large groups, kidnap them to an unknown destination, and use them as bargaining chips to collect ransoms not only from their relatives but also from the government. The current form of kidnapping on a large scale is attributed to the expansion and increase in the number of kidnappers involved; they collaborate and launch coordinated attacks, kidnapping many people at once.

The commercialization of kidnapping has become a canker not only in Nigeria but across the continent. It has affected all facets of the social, religious, and economic life of the nation, ranging from churches, mosques, businesses; no one is spared, (Ngwama 2014). The act pushes off potential investors, putting the families and relatives of captives in a traumatic emotional situation. That is why investors continue to relocate their investments to a more hospitable environment where their losses will be minimal. The effect is an increase in unemployment,

poverty, and panic in the country. The rate at which mayhem has been unleashed on Nigeria's peace loving people has not only drawn attention to the country's failure to protect and defend its citizens, but has also made most people dolorous.

The new twist is that they also demand the release of their gang members arrested and jailed in order to release their captors, (Hazen and Horner (2007). The effect is the increase in unemployment, poverty, fear and panic in the country. The rate at which mayhem has been unleashed on Nigeria's peace loving people has portrayed the country's failure to protect and defend its citizens, but this failure has fueled the exodus of young Nigerians to seek refuge in foreign countries. That is why the Global Center for Responsibility to Protect, Nigeria (2022) suggests that in the nation, there are more than 8.7 million people who require emergency humanitarian aid.

Fig1. Attacks by bandits between January and February 2023 in Nigeria



Source: Nigeria Security Tracker Dataset, (2023).

In Nigeria, the security situation has gotten more complicated and unpredictable. The figure shows an increasing trend in the kidnapping of citizens across the nation, but these figures constitute only a fraction of the reported cases, (Ojo, et al., 2023). The northern states as a whole

continue to experience an atmosphere of insecurity because of kidnappings. For example According to reports, bandit raids on various towns in Niger state's Munya LGA resulted in the deaths of four military men and three vigilantes on march 17 2023, (Abdullahi, 2023). On May 11, 2023, terrorists and gunmen abducted about 40 congregants from a church in Kaduna, (Hassan-Wuyo 2023). A village chief and a doctor were killed in an attack by gunmen on the Paikoro and Munya Local Government Areas of Niger State, and more than 120 people, including women and children, were abducted, (Mosadomi,2023).

The dangers associated with unbridled kidnapping in Nigeria leave the victims at the mercy of their captors. Children are kidnapped and hid in an open forest with all the environmental hazards associated with it; for example, children can die easily when they fall sick in the kidnappers den without medical attention, (Oluwole & Balogun 2022). According to Ojo, et al. (2023), the majority of the afflicted women who suffered rape and impregnated by their captors are left to suffer anguish because their communities frequently anathematize them. Forming the basis upon which it is reported that 44,000 kids in Zamfara State suffered the deaths of their parents to banditry reported by PM News on April 25, 2023. As a result of these developments, street begging and homelessness among children have increased astronomically in numerous cities throughout the cities and beyond. Preparing the ground for a generation of kids who won't get the attention they need and who could also grow up feeling impoverished, dissatisfied, and enraged. They might even grow up desiring retaliation.

Terrorist attack in Nigeria: A causal reflection

Terrorism was a new term in the Nigerian security vocabulary until Boko-Haram's activities in the north-east popularized it. As a consequence, some unscrupulous individuals have turned terrorism, which was previously seen by many as a foreign concern, into a Nigerian dilemma, (Imhonopi & Urim, 2016). In order to kill, manipulate, and ruin both lives and properties, the escalating terrorist attacks are unconnected with the government's propensity to disadvantage, isolate, and prejudice the majority of the populace, or some segments of it, from the distribution of national resources and opportunities. According to CFR (2022), Boko Haram is one of the deadliest terrorist networks in Africa and has killed and kidnapped a lot of people since 2009.

Their tactics include attacking citizens with improvised explosives, bombings, rape, public executions, and indiscriminately abducting and killing victims, (Ojewale, 2021; ACAPS, 2020). They attack markets, churches, homes, and federal military installations, causing huge casualties among civilians and military, while the federal government, through the security agencies, struggles to repel them, (Egbegi, et al. 2018).

The acts of terror unleashed on the Nigerian civilian population have created so much uneasiness to all sundry both local and international. The United states institute of peace defines terrorism as “a calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological. “In addition, it is the illegal application of aggression or force against people or property with the intention of intimidating or coercing a government, the general populace, or any subset thereof, in order to achieve political or social goals, (Trospen, 2009). Most often, the gathering of political, economic, and social dissidents is forced, and they often use force to drive down their demands in opposition to those set by the legal system.

The Organization of African Union (1994) further states that it is “any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of a state party and which may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to, any person, any member or group of persons or causes or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage”, (Organization of African Union 1994). Furthermore terrorism entails any “criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes that are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them” (UN, 1994).

The activities of a number of unlawful groups in Nigeria continue to demonstrate how their nefarious activity has increased security risks in all regions of the nation. The aforementioned organizations thrive on inflicting terror and mayhem on defenseless civilians in every geographical region of the nation. The main organization in the south-east responsible for instability include the IPOB, the Eastern Security Network, unknown gunmen, and kidnapers, (Nwangwu, 2022). Terrorism is the act that tends to willfully seize people's God-given personal liberties, inflicting pain, sorrow, and death on humans and other living things. It encapsulates

banditry, kidnapping, and other violent criminal activities that undermine personal liberties, peace, and unity. Violence crimes against fellow humans have rather created a mockery and distorted view of the essence of religion, customs, and traditions, desecrating sacred African culture and tradition, which frowns at the shed of innocent blood, rape, and kidnapping.

The Boko-Haram, IS-WA, armed bandits, kidnappers, and other terrorist organizations are on the rampage in the northern region of the country, while in the south-west and south-south, people are facing bandits, herdsmen assaults, and kidnappers. Their antecedents and current behavior are entirely consistent with a terrorist group. That is why different sub-national and regional strategies have been developed to combat the scourge as a result of the implications for human security caused by the needless attacks by armed transhumant herdsmen, bandits, and terrorists on peaceful civilians, as well as the Nigerian government's unwillingness to deal with the issue decisively, (Nwangwu, 2022). Kidnapping, banditry, and terrorism are separate types of criminal conduct, however, the lines between them are getting fuzzier due to their shifting methods of operation. In recent times, they have all been involved in attacking towns, stealing food and livestock, destroying government projects, and kidnapping citizens without ideological justifications like the earlier terrorist invaders. Utilization of weapons, whether simple or complex, the intent to loot important items, and the premeditated kidnapping of individuals are common themes that connect various violent criminal activities in the country, (Accord, 2022).

In an attempt to salvage the people at the state level, various regions have formed security and vigilante groups of diverse outfits to deal with and curtail the activities of terrorists in the regions. According to Kabir, (2022), the Western Nigeria Security Network, also known as Operation Amotekun, was established by the state governors of the South-West extraction as a regional security organization with the goal of mitigating insecurity within the region. In order to defend the region from the onslaught of herdsmen attacking their own people, the south-east IPOB also established a vigilante group known as the Eastern Security Network. Despite its formation, the residents of the region are currently suffering from a number of attacks that have been planned and executed by unknown gunmen, a splinter group from the IPOB and eastern security network. Similar vigilante organizations have been formed and armed around the nation to combat herdsmen attacks and insurgency, but little progress has been made in putting a stop to

bandits or terrorists operating in the nation; however, terrorist attacks have flourished unabated in all parts of the nation.

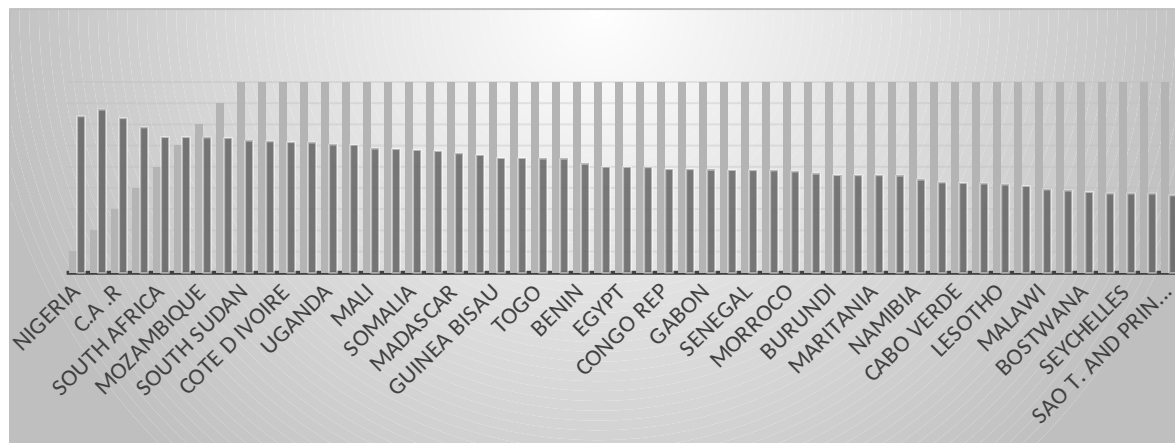
Although the nation faced numerous challenges like poverty, illiteracy, diseases, and inequality, having its own effect on the nation. As though that was not enough for the already impoverished nation, a terrorist invasion that struck Nigeria in 2009 became the beginning of a criminal onslaught against the federal republic of Nigeria (Imhonopi & Urim, 2016). It was as if, just as the Niger Delta kidnapers and agitators were laying down their arms in acceptance of the amnesty program, another bloodthirsty northern group took center stage and carved a thick, bloody map in Nigerian history. The northern group, particularly in the country's north-east, added a new dimension to Nigeria's security situation, with their actions being the most vociferous, bloodthirsty, and destructive in the country's history.

The group called Boko-Haram, which has it as a mantra and core principle as opposed to western education and westernization, first targeted the state in which they operated, demanding the full implementation of the Sharia system in the north-eastern state of Nigeria, (Khalid, 2021; Imhonopi & Urim, 2016). The insurgency quickly grew in size and firepower, and they began bombing churches, banks, hospitals, police stations, and military installations, among other things, in Nigeria's northeastern states, (Imhonopi & Urim, 2016). They added suicide bombings across the states to their lethal and colossal destructions; market centers, recreational centers, homes, and packs were not spared; they unleashed mayhem on every part of the states to such an extent that even sitting governors were no longer secure in their various government houses with all the security at their disposal.

The prevalence of violent crime in Nigeria has metamorphosed into a national epidemic and canker, affecting all facets, (Imhonopi & Urim, 2016). This has driven a large number of law-abiding people into a state of fear, mesmerized and maniacally perplexed by the rapid duplication of property devastation and human casualties around the country. The evidence is not farfetched considering how the methodology adopted by the government to restore normalcy in all strata of the nation fizzles out at the least challenge. Even the security apparatus, armed with the most modern and sophisticated weapons, has been unable to assert its authority and restore

peace in the country. This explains why Accord (2022) claims that, between April 2014 and June 2021, militants and bandits abducted 1,548 pupils in 11 consecutive events in northern Nigeria.

Fig 1.2 African countries and their crime rate 2021



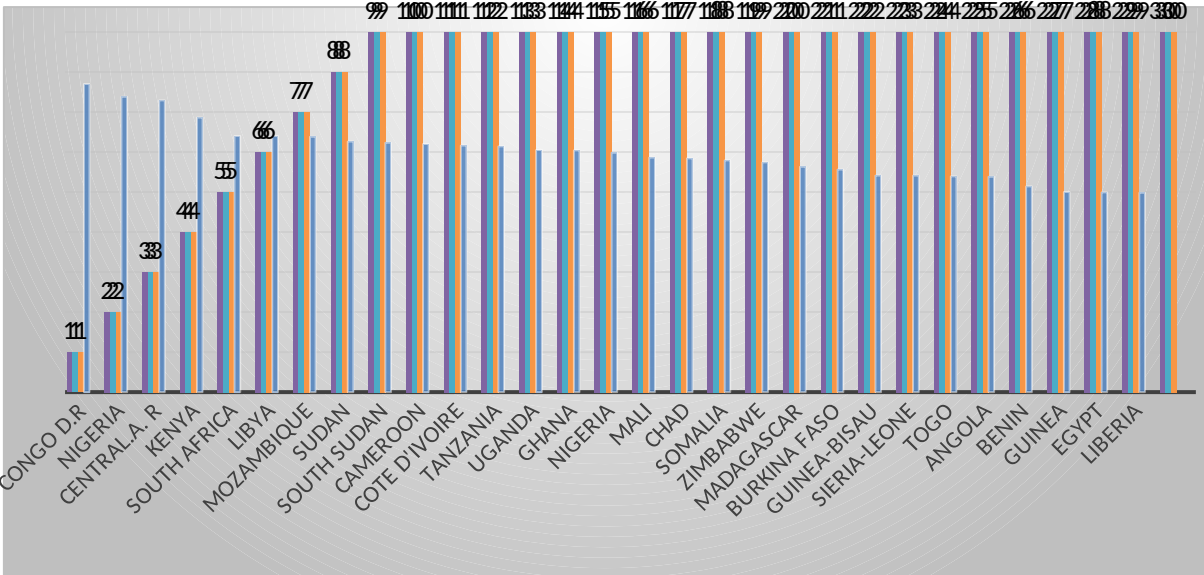
Source: STATISTA.COM

A close look at the figures shows that Nigeria is among the countries with the highest crime rate. This is unrelated to the numerous atrocities committed in the country by organized crime syndicates, unemployable youth, political thugs, petty thieves, sophisticated kidnapping syndicates, terrorists (BOKO-HARAM, ISWAP, BANDITS, ANSARU), and other lethal weapon-wielding individuals, (Ojo 2020; Oyewole et al., 2023). Any of these criminal activities are blamed on socio-economic factors that have rubbed the shine off the country, (Ajah et al., 2020). This is a trend that has consistently tripled within the last decade as attackers have intensified, fear and panic have become the order of the day, especially in remote communities and towns, (Okpa et al., 2018).

Some attribute it to the failure of the Nigerian state to decisively and deliberately make a commitment to protect its citizens from the numerous attacks, (Khalid, 2021). Many have even blamed it on leadership incompetence and ineffectiveness (Imhonopi & Urim, 2016). The reality is that no single individual or group is divinely mandated to extra judicially annihilate any member of the community, regardless of their grievances. The rule of law, love for humanity, and respect for diversity ought to regulate the activities of all members of the nation. Allowing

criminal activities to thrive not only poses a danger for the common man, but it also exposes the weak structural capacity upon which the nation is built.

Figure 1.3 Organized crime rate in Africa 2021



Source: Statista.com

The organized violent crimes visible in Nigeria in recent times have been replicated in almost all parts of the continent, where young men and women have been recruited and armed to cause harm, violence with an intention to kill, loot, kidnap, and demand monetary payment for the release of their captives. The pervasive mistreatment of civilians by non-state armed groups, when not addressed by African authorities, has given rise to the duplication of violent crime across the region. According to Cilliers (2023), despite the fact that a handful of armed organizations operate on a regional level, the majority of the violence in Africa today is a result of wars inside states rather than between nations. The figure above shows the rising incidents of violent crime across the continent, many civilians have fled the continent in search of asylum in Europe, America, and Asia. The evidence is in the increase in deaths in the Sahara desert and Mediterranean Sea, where mostly young Africans want a forced exit to Europe for safety and economic survival.

Allowing terrorism to exist in Nigeria has worrisome repercussions that affect not only Nigeria but the whole sub-region. To understand the consequences of the terrorism in the sub region, we refer to the population and the strength of these bloody, thirsty terrorist groups. They have infiltrated countries within the region and made the inhabitants of these countries slaves in their towns and communities. Some local governments have even adopted a terrorist as the head of the council, who collects taxes from the residents of these communities, (Oyero 2021). This is an affront to nation-building; they inflict unrestricted harm and destruction on the community, and in most instances, anyone found to disagree and not comply is either beheaded or executed cruelly and publicly. They rely on fear, intimidation, and harassment; of course, with sophisticated weapons at their disposal, it becomes easy to unleash mayhem on others.

The current wave of unfettered attacks on the people of Nigeria by terrorists across the nation started as a religious gathering in the north-east part of the country, (Adangor 2017). At this point, it was possible to destroy all their machinations. The failure of the authorities to swiftly arrest, prosecute, and sternly punish the perpetrators of misinforming and indoctrinating people with hate and intolerance towards others provided a breeding ground for full-scale anarchy. That act of negligence by the authorities made the insurgents develop into a terrorist organization, which is now affiliated with the deadly Islamic State and other terrorist groups across the globe.

Their activities grew because they were able to manipulate the loophole in the country's security network. Coupled with the fact that Nigeria is a country of multidimensional ethnic diversity, a situation that divides the country along religious, tribal, and ethnic distinctions, the differences are so glaring that there are widespread interethnic sentiments and suspicion. This observation is evident in almost every facet and façade of the Nigerian structure. For example, since the first republic's elections in Nigeria, the results of the voting pattern have always reflected religious and ethnic lines. Even the coups d'état, especially the most popular ones in Nigeria, were along ethnic and tribal lines.

The misunderstandings between the Boko-Haram commanders led to their division, some of whom paid allegiance to different international groups, (Euaa, 2019). The split gave birth to JAS, ISIS-WA, and ANSARU, another deadly group that will later complement the mayhem started by Boko Haram and their parent groups, (Euaa 2019). Their modus operandi is the same as their

parents group; the difference is that they have members from Chad and the Niger Republic; they concentrate on kidnapping of non-Muslims and government agents. They have a certain level of sentimental attachment to practicing Muslims, which Boko Haram never cared about at all, (Euaa 2019). To fund their activities, they kidnap and take ransom from the victims, representing a discontinuation from the lordship of Shekau, who led the Boko Haram insurgents. The ANSARU never lasted very long because they later reunited and collaborated with the Shekau's group; evidence of this is found in the activities leading to the kidnapping of Chibok girls, amongst others, (Oriola, 2023).

The recent modification in attacks carried out by Boko-Haram is an attestation that there have been influxes of foreign terrorist machinations into the Boko-Haram hierarchy (Gow et al., 2013). This is evident in the nature of targets and the kind of weapon used by the group, which are similar to those used by Al-Qaida, the Islamic State of West Africa, ISIS, and ISIL. The international dynamics have changed the leadership of the groups, with some pledging allegiance to Al-Qaida, others to ISIS West Africa, (Oriola, 2023). Making it difficult to pinpoint a particular group responsible for attacks in Nigeria and its neighbors, (Gow, et al., 2013). The dangers of splinter groups are that the split gives them the opportunity to regroup, recruit, and expand their territories because the new group will become more vicious in carrying out attacks to attract attention and ward off possible challengers.

Several causes have been attributed to the rise in insurgency in Africa and Nigeria; among them are poverty, political failure, illiteracy, unemployment, and the influx of uncontrolled arms into the African space. A young, vibrant, and agile youth population without a regular and paid employment opportunity will seek to foot their bills through crime, especially when they collude with others in that same circle (Gow, et al., 2013). Africa has the youngest population across the world, and many of these young people are unemployed without economic opportunities. The lack of opportunities for most of the unemployed youth posed a great danger and threat to the peace and survival of others within the community (Verwimp et al., 2019; Egbegi et al., 2018). Addressing the issue of unemployment will have a positive impact on the dynamism and scale of terrorist activities on the continent.

Religion also plays a critical role in violent crime across the country; many of these religious fundamentalist groups spring up because of their fallacious and adulterated religious teachings,

(Olalekan, et al., 2018). The proponents claim that they have been given a divine mandate by whatever they subscribe to, to purify and return all mankind to their own precepts and doctrine; they do so in an attempt to convert people to their religion, (Deji, 2019). That informs why it becomes fundamentally important and necessary to regulate the activities of religious preachers and followers because, while it can be a tool for progress, development, and peaceful coexistence, it can also be a very dangerous weapon of destruction in certain circumstances.

One must critically examine the demographic, social, and economic harm done to Nigeria's northern states, particularly those in the epicenter of the attack, in order to comprehend the impact and repercussions of permitting insurgents to thrive there. These areas have been deserted, bringing all human activities to a halt. The implication is that it has resulted in an increase in military expenditure in an attempt to quell the insurgents in Nigeria. The funding for military equipment and machinery has also put a huge strain on the nation's economy, (Ojo et.al.2023). These sums might have been utilized to construct infrastructure that would have assisted the growth and development of the country.

Bandits in Nigeria: Terrorism redefined

The consequence of negligence and economic isolation is dissatisfaction, which, if not controlled through policy and the legal framework, will yield anarchy and chaos, (Verwimp et al., 2019). Nigeria is a prime example of a country divided along religious and ethnic lines, and some unscrupulous mentalities have taken advantage of this division, (Trudell et al., 2021). The level of suspicion amongst the tribes that form the federal republic of Nigeria is both alarming and unprecedented. This has fueled tension and violence across the country. The current menace of violent crime in the country cannot be unconnected to the socio-economic and ethno-religious discontent that exists between the North and the South, (Ajah et al., 2020).

The Nigerian state has persisted in combating and mitigating the effects of bandit attacks across the country. The number of bandit casualties has grown rapidly, and their attacks have forced many people to flee their homes. Some of their tactics include rape, kidnapping, cattle rustling, murder, theft, shooting, and burning, (Ojewale, 2021; ACAPS, 2020). Threats increase when criminals and terrorists work together to carry out an assault, such as the one in Owo that resulted in the murder of forty people while attending church service, as reported on BBC News

on June 17, 2022. Additionally, Boko Haram and other Islamist terrorist organizations are collaborating more and more on recruitment, training, logistics, weapons, and attacks on vulnerable communities, kidnapping people en masse, (Ojo et al., 2023). Some of these kidnappings are highlighted by the ungoverned areas of the country, making it difficult for law enforcement agents to successfully eradicate banditry.

The unsolved conflicts between farmers and herders have also had its negative effects on the state, as a result farmers' repeatedly complains that the castles ruin their farmland and crops. Long-standing complaints led to the farmer picking up weapons to defend his farm land and means of livelihood from the ranchers and their fortresses, (Adelakun et al. 2015; Burton 2016; Hassan et al., 2018). In protection of their lives and castles, the herdsmen also armed themselves with weapons, and the fracas resulted in perpetual conflicts. Oli et al. (2018), argues that, this fracas continued unabated until the community and youths within the community formed vigilantes along the farms to protect their people. Attacks by the herders, who are equipped with cutting-edge weapons, often occur without warning as retaliation for the murder of a fellow herder or cattle, (Bello& Abdullahi, 2021). The harmony and cooperation between farmers and herdsmen were shattered and battered, and it has since deteriorated into banditry and abduction. At the end the nation which has experienced an increase in poverty, hunger, and malnutrition contends with the effects of these conflicts.

For many years, Fulani herders have been on the move in search of lush pasture for their animals, (Ojo, et at., 2023).The cattle herders move their cattle from one location to another, especially through the north, east, west, and south, in search of pastures. These movements are mostly carried out in the bush as a means of feeding their livestock and providing protein for populations around the country. This strategy has been used since the country's founding, both crop farmers and ranchers worked together in and out of the forest to feed the people of Nigeria and Africa, (Ojewale & Balogun, 2022). The conflict that plagued the crop farmer's herdsmen has resulted in unwanted attacks. The upsurge in bandit assaults that have caused extensive relocation throughout the country, the problem has gotten worse in recent years.

The perpetrators are forever exploiting deficiencies and loopholes in the country's security framework, such as weak enforcement, poverty, insufficient military presence, and incompetent military tactics, (Brenner 2021). Nigeria's massive landmass, large population, incompetent

police work, and lack of military coverage of the whole nation are practically unfeasible, (Ojo, 2020). As a consequence of the lack of military or police presence, poor local governance administration, and little obvious economic activity in rural communities, the population is at the mercy of bandits who take advantage of the chance to plunder and intimidate the people. Armed bandits are active across Nigeria, not just in the north-west; they are also prevalent in the north-central areas of the nation. For example, according to SDP-Nextier (2023), despite an increase in violent attacks from 1,169 instances in 2021 to 1,671 cases in 2022, 94 occurrences have been reported in the first 20 days of 2023, and more are continuously being reported.

For instance, bandit assaults are thought to have claimed the lives of four thousand nine hundred individuals between 2018 and 2020, while about three hundred thousand people have been internally displaced and sixty thousand have fled their homes, (ACAPS 2020). They represent a fraction of the documented cases, while the undocumented cases remain unaccounted for. Massive effects were felt on the nation's already turbulent economic, political, and ethnic mistrust and suspicion that have dogged the country since independence, as a result of the destruction, annihilation, and looting by armed bandits. Prompting the International Organization for Migration (2022) to state that armed banditry caused at least 4,900 deaths between 2018 and 2020 and thousands of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the north-west.

Theoretical Background

Situational Action Theory (SAT)

Per-Olof Wikström popularized Situational Action Theory (SAT) in 2004 and its relationship to abduction, banditry, and terrorism in Nigeria. The theory aims to identify the reasons for violent crime in Nigeria and takes into account the disciplines of cognitive, bioethical, socioeconomic, and environmental factors. In essence, it seeks to understand why individuals make the decision to transgress the rules and regulations, (Wikström, 2006; Bouhana and Wikstrom, 2011). A person's engagement with settings that encourage recidivism and their propensity for wrongdoing, or how much effort they expend in an uncontrolled or mismanaged environment, and how much consciousness they have, interact to produce criminal activity, which is unlawful behavior abhorred by society, (Wilkstrom, 2014).

The situational action theory postulates that a person's personality and the environment in which they live are what motivate them to commit crimes, (Wilkstrom, 2006). Even though settings occasionally play a part in these causes, people are nonetheless responsible for their actions. Given what has been said so far, crime is committed when it is seen to be a good and suitable course of action, depending on the situation, or when a person lacks individual self-control, (Wikström, Per-Olof, 2019). The circumstance, the environment, the person's character, and the degree of exposure are the four pillars upon which the situational action theory is built, (Accord, 2022). These pillars determine whether a community is susceptible to crime or not, and in Nigeria, all of these factors are present and actively contributing to the hierarchical conspiracy.

The fact of the matter is that people are more likely to participate in unlawful activities if they are subjected to various forms of poverty, left unsupervised, and have access to resources that provide them some measure of freedom from poverty. It highlights the fact that every action a person takes is a result of the influence of their environment; in other words, the environment influences the patterns of human behavior, (Wilkstrom, 2014). Following this, more people are vulnerable to being impacted by terrorist, kidnapping, or banditry activities in the most remote areas of the North, (Uche & Iwuamadi, 2018). An individual with a low propensity for crime should be less susceptible to the reasons behind delinquent behavior because of their high level of personal integrity and the presence of governmental authorities.

Situational action theory offers the following specific statements about a person's surroundings, circumstances, setting, and behavior: A person will either engage in criminal activity or live up to the law, depending on how these factors interplay. Situational action theory offers the following specific statements about a person's surroundings, circumstances, setting, and behavior: A person will either engage in criminal activity or live up to the law, depending on how these factors interplay. However, the propensity to commit crime will not only emanate from personal disposition but can also be fueled depending on the environment, engagement, and interaction with close relatives. Society and traditional authorities within the enclave form part of the environment and setting that can either encourage or discourage violent young people from getting involved in violent crime. Banditry, terrorism, insurgency, militancy, and piracy are all manifestations of the post-colonial state's inability and incapacity (across all tiers of government,

from the federal to the state and local levels) to advance the welfare and security aspirations of the populace, (Oyewole & Omotola 2022).

The following are specific assumptions:

1. "People are essentially rule-guided creatures.

People express their desires and respond to frictions within the context of rule-guided choice.

2. Social order is based on shared rules of conduct.

Patterns in human behavior are based on rule-guided routines.

3. People are the source of their actions.

People perceive, choose, and execute their actions.

4. The causes of action are situational.

People's particular perception of action alternatives, process of choice, and execution of action are triggered and guided by the relevant input from the person-environment interaction.

5. Crimes are moral actions.

Crimes are 'actions that break rules of conduct (stated in law) about what is the right or wrong thing to do in a particular circumstance' and are best explained as such, (Centre for Analytic Criminology 2023).

The situational concept suggests that in order to reduce the appeal of crime, the glorification of its benefits should be reduced. This would help Nigeria eradicate all sorts of crime. People who are not exposed to violent crime tend to have far lower criminal appetites than those who are (Bouhana & Wikström, 2011). Kidnapping, banditry, and terrorist acts in Nigeria have increased as a result; social-economic trends and environmental trends have not only affected deviant

conduct but have also given it a tasty appeal among the susceptible population. Policy, principle, and direction have also not helped the prevailing criminal circumstances.

According to Clarke, (2005), the implementation of situational crime prevention approaches will determine the extent to which the actions of bloodthirsty people may be stopped in the Nigerian environment. Additionally, crime prevention becomes feasible when the government takes out the contextual variables. The government must make a conscious effort to raise situational hazards in areas that are prone to crime in order to contain and discourage those with criminal tendencies, signifying a deliberate and concrete approach to ending violent crime across the nation, (Freilich, & Graeme 2017).

Factors that influence banditry, kidnappings, terrorist and other violent attacks in Nigeria

Inadequate armed forces representation and visibility

Apart from poverty, unemployment, and the proliferation of arms, one factor that continues to increase the acts of terrorism in Nigeria, like bandits, kidnappers, and terrorists, is the ratio of military and police personnel to civilian populations. The combined number of 350,000 police officers and 223,000 soldiers shown in the chart for the country's approximately 230,000,000 inhabitants is egregiously inadequate. According to Akpede (2019), the Nigerian police are an integral strategic partner of the government in stemming out the criminal element within the system, but they are not adequate in comparison to the population distribution. Meaning that the ratio of police personnel to civilians in Nigeria is inadequate compared to other first-world countries, the article points to the causal factor of less police personnel being available to the overall population.

According to Global firepower (2023), Nigeria has a total of two hundred and twenty thousand military personnel, three hundred and seventy police personnel, eighteen thousand air force personnel, twenty-five thousand navy personnel, and other paramilitary agencies. These numbers are less than the global stipulated ratio of military personnel to civilians. Given the numbers of police personnel, it demonstrates a glaring lack of adequate police officers when compared to the United Nations' prediction of one hundred thousand populations per police station in 2016. Also, with the increase in the number of bandits, terrorists, and kidnappers, it becomes imperative to

increase personnel to match the strength of perpetrators. That is in addition to the application of modern technology to identify hot spots and proactively avert attacks. Technology offers an opportunity to reduce the tendency for organized violent crime through a partnership between personnel, the community, and equipment.

Table 1.0 Countries population, army and police personnel

COUNTRIES	POPULATION	TOTAL PERSONNEL, (A)	ARMY	TOTALPOLICE PERSONNEL, (P)	A+P
CHINA	1,425,736,295	4,000,000		1,600,000	5,600,000
INDIA	1,426,223,069	5,100,000		1,585,353	6,685,353
U.S.A	339,662,653	2,200,000		913,161	3,113,161
RUSIA	144,535,162	3,600,000		756,859	4,356,859
INDONESIA	277,116,311	1,100,000		579,000	1,679,000
EGYPT	112,399,943	1,300,000		500,000	1,800,000
MEXICO	128,283,731	409,000		470,676	879,676
BRAZIL	216,196,586	2,100,000		436,514	2,536,514
TURKEY	85,734,018	890,000		412,624	1,302,624
PAKISTAN	239,626,481	1,500,000		354,221	1,854,221
NIGERIA	222,839,120	223,000		350,000	573,000
ITALY	58,901,795	359,600		276,750	636,350
JAPAN	123,414,624	317,000		251,939	568,939
SPAIN	47,527,673	211,300		249,907	461,207
ARGENTINA	45,721,590	103,300		244,683	347,983
GERMANY	83,301,529	213,600		243,625	457,225
THAILAND	71,784,038	699,500		230,000	929,500
FRANCE	64,733,597	375,100		220,000	595,100
PHILLIPPINES	117,014,962	336,600		170,000	506,600
ALGERIA	45,481,202	467,200		160,000	627,200
SOUTH AFRICA	60,315,076	80,400		156,489	236,889
BANGLADESH	172,634,239	226,900		155,800	382,700
UKRAINE	36,498,678	1,200,000		152,000	1,352,000
COLUMBIA	52,039,194	516,000		150,000	666,000
BELARUS	9,506,283	444,900		136,990	581,890
ENGLAND & WALES (UK)	67,695,425	227,100		129,584	356,684
PERU	34,292,381	346,000		104,000	450,000
MALAYSIA	34,241,867	431,800		102,000	533,800
POLAND	41,190,421	189,400		100,000	289,000
SOUTH KOREA	51,790,955	6,700,000		99,060	6,799,060
KENYA	54,901,749	29,100		95,000	124,100

Source: World atlas (2023) & World population review (2023)

According to the United Nations, it is recommended that the ratio of civilians to police personnel ought to be four hundred and fifty civilians to one police officer, but the reverse is the case in Nigeria because the police personnel available for civilians are inadequate (Akpede 2019). For example, there is one police officer for every five hundred and fifty civilians in Nigeria, and there are about three hundred and seventy thousand police personnel on active duty in Nigeria (Tribune, 2022). The irony is that the majority of the police personnel are attached to the political elites, banks, and other businesses and affluent individuals. Further depleting the average number of insufficient police personnel available to citizens across the country.

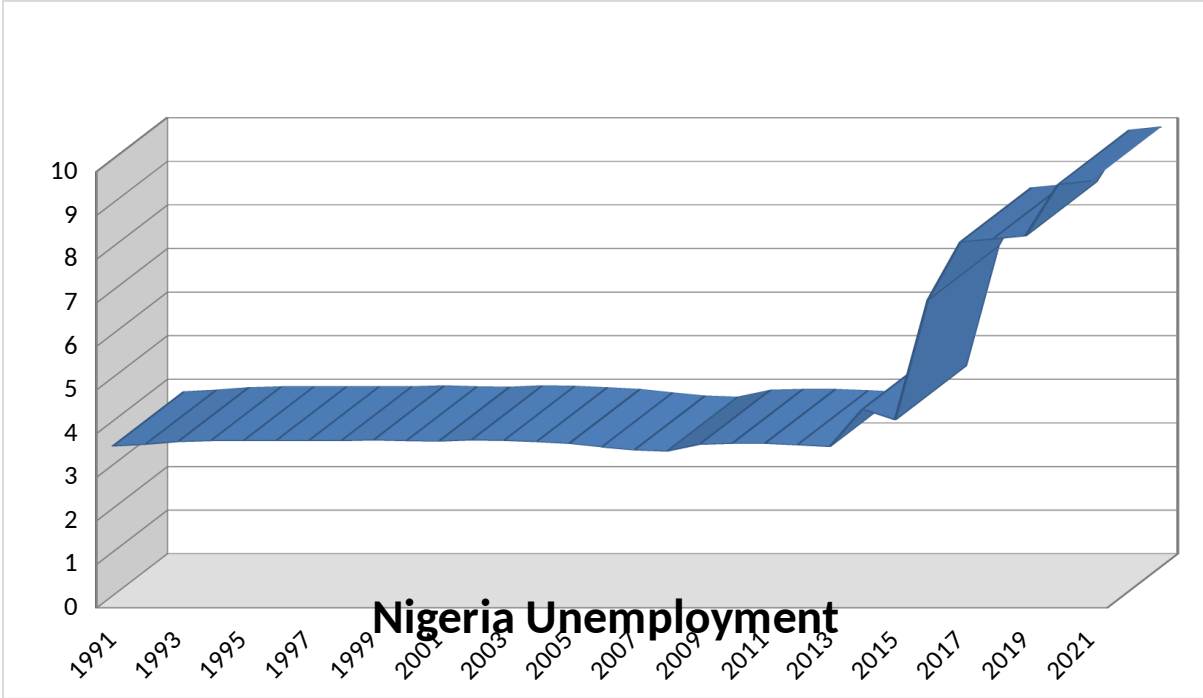
Ethno-Religious dimensions

The consequence of negligence and economic isolation is dissatisfaction, which, if not controlled through policy and the legal framework, will yield anarchy and chaos. Nigeria is a prime example of a country divided along religious and ethnic lines, and some unscrupulous mentalities have taken advantage of this division to cause mayhem with religion and injustice as a veil to hide their atrocious behaviors, (Trudell, et al., 2021). The level of suspicion amongst the tribes that form the federal republic of Nigeria is both alarming and unprecedented. This has fueled tension and violence across the country. The current menace of violent crime in the country cannot be unconnected to the socio-economic and ethno-religious discontent that exists between the North and the South, (Ajah, et al., 2020; Verwimp et al., 2019).

With many ethnic nationalities and languages, Nigeria is plagued with all kinds of agitations arising from ethnic suspicion and intolerance (Ajah, et al., 2020). This kind of suspicion has rather fueled terrorism, criminality, and other forms of vice (Adangor, 2017). Even with an abundance of youthful opportunities and a deposit of several natural resources, the nation is still one of the poorest in the world in terms of development, progress, and living standards attributed to negative ethnicity, (Kaila, & Azad, 2023). The government's inability to offer citizens, particularly the young population that makes up the bulk of the jobless, real economic prospects has had consequences that have contributed to the escalation of violent attacks across the geo-

political zone of the country. If it is not the activities of unknown gunmen, kidnappers in the south-east, or the armed herdsmen attacking in the north and south, it is bandits and the dreaded terrorist in the north, creating a plethora of uneasiness.

High unemployment Rate and Poverty



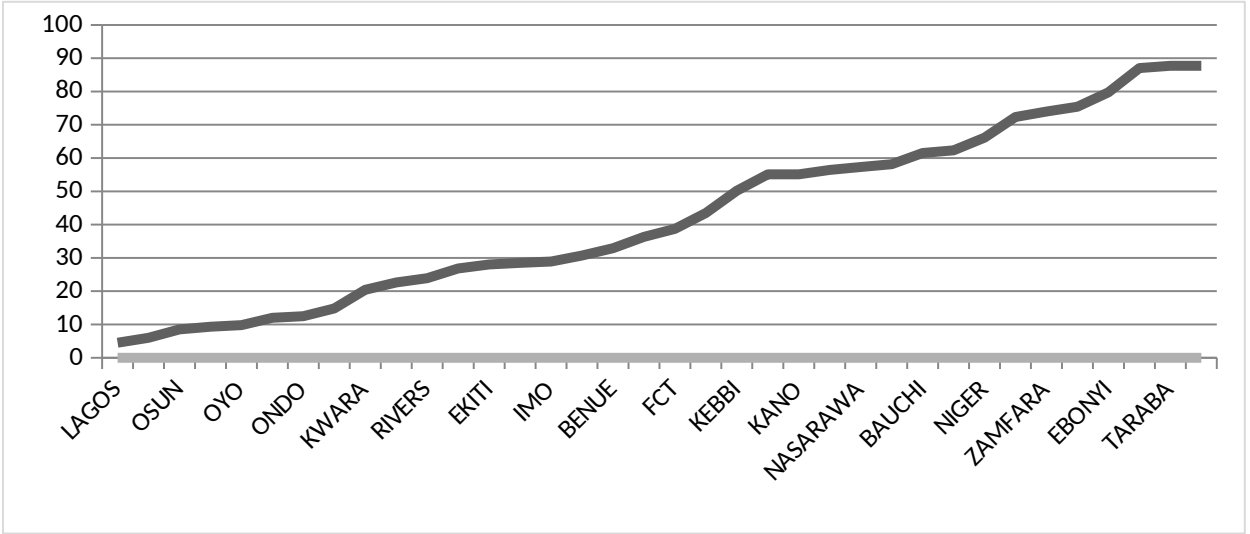
Data Source: Macro trends 2023

The graphic above depicts a rising jobless rate that is steadily increasing and casting a bleak future for the Nigerian youth. According to Ezeajughu (2021), young women and men account for four out of every ten jobless people worldwide. This demonstrates that in Nigeria, with its disproportionately young population, youth unemployment will abound. According to Vremudia (2012), youth unemployment is three times higher than adult unemployment in several countries, notably Nigeria. The unemployment rate is currently at its highest level, hovering at about 37%, (Egole, 2023). Regarding the connection between unemployment and crime, two main schools of

thought exist. The first school places emphasis on the "supply of offenders," while the second school places emphasis on the "supply of victims" (Ezeajughu 2021). In Nigeria, particularly, the supply of offenders has exceeded the demand, which explains why many young people have taken the life of crime. Due to the dearth of high-quality employment prospects, young people can be seen in every corner of the country fighting for survival in positions that pay next to nothing. This happens because their sense of dignity and self-worth has long ago been undermined.

There have been several reasons why Boko-Haram continues to thrive in Africa, especially in Nigeria, where defeating them and their associates has become a mirage. Crime flourishes in an unstable, volatile, and poor neighborhood; it preys on unsuspecting members of the public who are deluded by religious sentimentalism. Again, the influence of foreign terrorist organizations networks is a defining challenge for the control and extermination of insurgencies in Africa. These external influences, with a more sophisticated network and funding, contribute exceedingly to the strategy, prevalence, and formation of external forces that cannot be underestimated when it comes to violence and insurgency in Nigeria, (Cohen 2013).

Nigeria poverty distribution state by state Nigeria, 2022.



Source: [statista.com](https://www.statista.com)

The graph above indicates a steady rise in poverty distribution in Nigeria; it shows that poverty exists in the south-west, south-south, and south-east regions but is more pronounced and on an

incremental scale in the northern region. According to a recent survey by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the National Social Safety-Nets Coordinating Office (NASSCO), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), The result of the study on the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) in Nigeria showed that 63% of Nigerians, which is equivalent to one hundred and thirty-three million people, are multi-dimensionally poor, (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Furthermore, it is reported that 65% of the extreme poor—about eighty six million people—live in the north while the rest live in the south, (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). The wealth discrepancy between the north and south has not only exposed the ineffectiveness of leadership to fight poverty but has also exposed the extent and suffering of the poor in the country. Due to the high percentage of poverty in the north caused by high unemployment, terrorist cults have access to a large pool of potential recruits who can be brainwashed and trained.

Considering that Nigeria's unemployment rate is at 37%, the highest level seen since the country's return to multi-party democracy, (Egole, 2023). An inducement for youth to participate in criminal behavior, fraud, banditry, and terrorism, while authorities are perplexed and unable to find a solution to terrorist attacks that have stifled economic activities in the affected localities. The implications are debilitating, cancerous, and tentatively pushing the most populous nation into terminus quern. In most cases, the destruction caused by these invaders is immeasurable, especially in relation to food availability across the country and beyond, pitting farmers and herdsmen against each other in a battle for land and space, (Ajibefun, 2018). Revitalizing the age-old struggle for primacy based on religion, ethnicity, and demographics among the many federating units to the point that even religion has failed to defuse tension or forge a unified front for the advancement of the country (Imhonopi & Urim, 2016; Deji, 2019; Okpa et al., 2018).

Poor performance of the government armed forces

The poor performance of the military and security apparatus in guarding the nation's main military installations and penal facilities has led to a lack of confidence between the federal government and other stakeholders. For example, how can someone who can't protect himself protect another, (Khalid, 2021)? In recent times, hoodlums, bandits, and terrorists have attacked

the foremost Nigerian Defense Academy, killing and abducting military personnel. The burgling of the presidential palace, the kidnapping and killing of officers at the military officers' base, the burning of police stations, the attack on correctional and prison facilities across the nation, and the freeing of hardened criminals all serve as proof that the national security system needs a reengineering in terms of approach, strategy, and implementation.

Patronage, cronyism, nepotism, and favoritism in appointment instead of meritocracy

The political elite have made significant contributions to Nigeria's moral and social decadence, which is in a worrying state in which wealth, power, and corruption have replaced effort, hard work, and commitment, (Dodo, 2010). For instance, the Nigerian political system has completely abandoned meritocracy, national character, due process, and due diligence in appointments and instead is mired in the politics of nepotism, ethnicity, patronage, and favoritism (Ojo, et al., 2023). Attacks against the country have escalated, and one of the principal factors is the concentration of the nation's wealth in the clutches of a privileged few. The political elite's exploitation of the populace and disregard for their fundamental duty to create a society free from corruption, intolerance, and ethnocentrism is largely a factor that is aggravating terrorist recruitment and sentimentalism.

Incompetent political leadership and Policy Mismatch

The Nigerian state, through its perverted leadership style, continued neglect of its responsibilities to the people, byzantine corruption, poor governance, and weak and compromised institutions, realized it had created its own lethal weapon, (Adangor, 2017; Egbegi et al., 2018; Alexander & Klein, 2009; Anyadike, 2023). There is an inextricable link between security and development. It has also shown that the realization of the country's industrial development will be far more difficult so long as it remains vulnerable to terrorist attacks, recruitment, radicalization, and penetration. This threatens not only its political stability but also the economy, putting the government's attempts to meet the demands for swift industrialization and economic growth under a veil.

Repressive government regulations, which more often than not result in poverty and socioeconomic underdevelopment, are the main reason why terrorism has prospered in places

that are primarily Muslim, (Verwimp et al., 2019; Cohen, 2013). These circumstances force a segment of the Nigerian population, particularly those living in isolated states, to watch the government's negligence toward their condition with dismay, animosity, and resentment, (Ogbonaya, 2020; Verwimp et al., 2019; Oyewole, et al., 2023). Due to these disconnections, it is easy for individuals to follow the teachings of religious teachers that distort reality in the name of a better life and as a method to exact revenge on the central authority. In order to ensure access to resources and aid, young men are recruited to assault, abduct, and pillage goods from adjacent towns and bring them back to their villages. As a result, they veer in the direction of the religious preachers they turn to for financial and material support, (Nnam, et al., 2019; Egbegi, et al., 2018).

Lack of government visibility

In addition to serving as a breeding ground for banditry, ungoverned areas and its remoteness make it ideal for escaping criminals who commit other types of crimes, (Ojewale, et al., 2022; Ojo, 2020). Most of these distant regions have never been the subject of a government social or economic initiative, and they are still not reachable by road even today. The sick and pregnant women will travel great distances to receive medical care since they are cut off from modern civilization and development. Rural residents get frustrated and despair when the federal, state, and local governments fail to solve their problems. With that disillusionment, it becomes easier to be swayed by religious fanatic fundamentalists whose only intention is to use the vacuum as a breeding ground and canopy for kidnapping, cattle rustling, armed robbery, banditry, and terrorist attacks on other places, (Olalekan et al., 2018).

In light of the fact that there is terror in almost every state of the federation, the country cannot afford not to increase the number of military personnel. The military and other agencies need to be present in large numbers to thwart the attempts of kidnapers, bandits, terrorists, and other illegal groups whose sole goal is to harm others if they are to have any national influence in the face of security issues across the country. The tribune (2022), further states that Nigeria must have an average of 2.5 million police officers nationwide in order to guarantee efficient policing and safeguard life and properties.

The effects of superior power and technique

This circumstance necessitates a quick response since criminals are more likely to give up their illicit activities when they know they are outnumbered in terms of personnel and equipment. However, when it becomes clear that they are the majority, this feeds their superiority complex, and when they succeed, it suggests that they are infallible and superior to the nation's security apparatus, which encourages others to join the cult of destruction. The whole law enforcement agency must be ready in mind and equipped to instill discipline and order in society in order to confine, dissuade, and discourage every attempt by people to participate in criminal activity. This is crucial for a thriving society free from kidnapping, animosity, and crime.

When all the fundamental presumptions are upheld, the situational crime prevention technique can function successfully and efficiently in Nigeria. The assumptions are: raising the stakes while lowering the benefits; minimizing provocation, and eliminating justifications (Freilich & Graeme 2017). This is the case because the risk of participating in crime will gradually lower its appeal and allure. Reducing the reward for crime will stop individuals from committing it since there is no longer any profit to be made. Citizens will become hostile to the government under circumstances where there is an uneven distribution of national resources, a lack of development in their neighborhood, pronounced ethnocentric political appointments, and marginalization, (Okpa, et al., 2018). To reduce the likelihood of provocation, the government must act to address all problems, grievances, and injuries swiftly, pro-actively, and decisively.

Environmental and economic crime prevention methods interlaced with situational crime prevention strategies would not only lessen terrorism, banditry, and abduction in Nigeria, but they would also remove these crimes' inclinations and obliterate their support base among the public. The lack of visibility and action by the federal government in the neighborhood is one of the environmental issues. Eliminating sacred cows because crime is crime regardless of the people involved while creating an atmosphere that is economically feasible and rewards commitment and hard work instead of sycophancy, violence, and corruption, individuals become less prone to crime when surroundings conducive to success are developed.

Observations

The activities of bandits, kidnapers, and terrorists have threatened all facets and fabrics of nationhood and heightened poverty, unemployment, intolerance, fear, and panic. It has exacerbated a wide range of additional socioeconomic problems for the nation and its people, throwing a cloud of uncertainty over the pursuit of peace and prosperity. Forcing more people to flee the country, others displaced, while the rest lost their source of livelihood, savings, and peace became elusive because of kidnappings, banditry, and terrorist attacks.

The recent rise in criminal activities in Nigeria has led to the awful violence and killings that are presently being perpetrated by terrorists, bandits, and kidnapers. According to Khalid (2021), successful governments in Nigeria have all attempted to address the country's security challenges but have not had much success because most policies have failed to address the root causes of the menace. Interventions fall short of long-term solutions to combat the high number of violent crimes, discourage and dislodge its network, and exterminate its roots across the nation, (Olalekan, et al., 2018). The current rise in kidnappings, terrorist attacks, and banditry assaults illustrates Nigeria's ongoing challenges in combating violent crime. This chronic problem has manifested and transformed into modern-day enslavement. In the end, security necessitates collaboration sufficient to thwart or defeat an attack, but since so many non-military components are needed to produce efficient military power, a concern for security can never be limited to the final military output, (Ojo, 2020).

Attacks against the nation have had a negative, devastating and contagious impact on the economy and growth of the nation, to the extent that nobody is spared in the present state of unmitigated attacks. Leaving vulnerable members of the public disoriented, disillusioned and displaced from their comfort zones, for examples; war-torn places consistently have the greatest number of children and women casualties, (Wole, 2021). This article, among other things, offers traditional viewpoints on the recent security issues faced by the nation, including security lapses, terrorist attacks, kidnappings, and bandit attacks. It seeks to evaluate the conditions, challenges, and modern dimension of the activities of Boko-Haram, bandits, and terrorist attacks in Nigeria and offer workable recommendation to address the security challenges. The difficulties are significant, far-reaching, and dangerous for the country's welfare. That supports the need to examine the causes and effects of the rise in attacks against the state, provide recommendations, and offer a holistic pathway towards reducing or eliminating violent crime in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Finally, we need to get rid of crime in our society by instilling these African ideals in our culture in our children. The value of a good reputation and honesty, since a good reputation is worth more than riches and jewels, principles of nationalism and patriotism, the virtues of generosity and peace, since they are essential to our survival. The ethics of perseverance and hard work since the get-rich-quick approach is evil, and the ideals of brotherhood and friendship since each person accomplishes considerably more together. The tenets of compassion and sincerity, the attributes of humility and sound mind, the virtues of selflessness and sound judgment, and the value of accountability and responsibility are important because the responsibility for success depends on the willingness to be responsible for failure. To create a new Nigeria free from kidnappers, banditry, terrorist attacks, greed, corruption, and individualism, we must uphold the ideals of honesty and restraint. With the purpose of ensuring that we will pass down to our offspring a nation of which they can be proud and for which they will always be thankful to us for having created a better, more prosperous society

Recommendations

The government should increase the number of all armed forces personnel, fully equipped with modern crime fighting technologies to detect criminal hideouts quickly and act proactively.

Federal appointments must be based on merit, devoid of ethno-religious affiliations.

Attempts must be made to protect all the entry points (borders) in Nigeria.

The government must be visible through policies, agencies, and development throughout the country, especially in rural areas.

The chiefs and the people need to collaborate to stamp out terror amongst them; the community must question the source of unexplained wealth, the families and people must condemn and interrogate every dubious character within the community.

The government must provide equal opportunities for all irrespective of tribe, ethnicity, and religion; there must also be deliberate attempts by stakeholders and policymakers to address poverty, unemployment, and religious fundamentalist preachers.

The personnel of the armed forces must be motivated and compensated adequately, and those who die in the course of their duty, their family members must not be neglected.

Authorities must create basic amenities across the length and breadth of the country to prompt action against criminal elements within the system. Appointments must meet the provisions and principles of federal character based on merit.

The local government authorities must be empowered and resourced to bring the needed development to all areas because they are the interface between the state government, the federal government, and the people in rural communities. Their autonomy, as provided by the constitution, should be respected free from the state governor's interference. The local government's authorities are the interface between the people in rural areas, state governments, and the federal government, making them an integral part of the fight against violent crime in Nigeria.

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