

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF KIDNAPPING FOR RANSOM AS A SOURCE OF TERRORISM FINANCING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract:

Kidnapping for ransom started in Niger-Delta and South-Eastern region of Nigeria, the act continues to grow and was extended to the Northern region; the perpetrators keep on getting stronger every day, operating with more sophisticated weapons, citizens especially in the north are always been disturbed by the terrorist groups, they often strike against the citizens at will, without any form of resistance from the state security agencies, this is because the state security architecture is overwhelmed. Most parts of the country are no longer safe, and this may likely attract international sanctions that would impair the image of the country. Thus, this paper used crime causation theory to assessed the role of kidnapping for ransom as a source of terrorism financing in Nigeria, we used information from literature and records from reliable media sources to examine how lucrative the act is and explained the reason for the persistent growing of the act. We found out that kidnapping for ransom is extraordinary lucrative enterprise, and this serves as the reason behind the persistent growing of the act, we also found out that the act is strongly connected to terrorism financing, as it is stated to be second, after direct state sponsorship. However, we recommended effective enforcement of the legislation that prohibit paying ransom, government efforts that will give family of victims relief and hope for reuniting with their loved ones, adequate public relations with security operatives and engaging the youths with empowerment for self-reliance as a solutions to the menace.

Keywords: Kidnapping, Ransom, Abduction, Terrorism Finance

Introduction:

The number one primary responsibility of a State is *National Security*, failing to provide such will surely cause a great threat against the existence of the state (Orka, 2016). However, the state in Nigeria's post-colonial society has failed in the guaranteeing the security of the people (Peter, 2020; Peter and Ocheni, 2015; Asogwa and Peter, 2009). This failure of the state has occasioned the free operation of non-state violent actors such as militia groups, bandits, terrorists, and kidnapper organisations thereby necessitating the perpetuity of the contradictions of development and national security. Insecurity has remained the blight of Nigeria right from colonial days; but unlike what is obtained in the pre-independence period, in comparison to the present, the cumulative incidents currently witnessed within the democratic dispensation beseeches the question on how the challenge was minimized during the pre-colonial, colonial and military regime (Enons Intelligence, 2021). Nigeria is always regarded as a giant country that has the ability to resolve its domestic security challenges by itself, and such wrong assertion led to very poor co-operation in combating terrorism at boarder level between neighboring countries (Olivier Guitta, 2014).

'Kidnapping'; both the word and the act are not new among Nigerians. Prior to the full blown of this criminal act in Nigeria, there were some number of reports on kidnapping

and abductions against multinational corporations and government personalities in Niger Delta and South-Eastern region of the country, which the perpetrators claimed that they carried out this criminal act to draw the attention of the government to the underdevelopment and deserting of the region by oil companies; subsequently and unfortunately, kidnapping for ransom has now become a lucrative business with a range of our aggrieved unemployed youths venturing into it (Emanemua and Akinlosotu, 2016). However, this research work will make use of crime causation theory (social exchange theory) to establish the scholarly views that proved kidnapping for ransom as terrorism financing. Social exchange theory is an off-shoot of rational choice approach, which views “human behavior as been guided by pleasure-seeking” tendency. People continue to do what they have found to be rewarding, they ceased doing what has proved to be costly in the past; to understand behavior we need to understand an individual’s history of rewards and costs. Using exchange theory, kidnapping and receiving a ransom for returning hostages can be viewed as a special kind of give and take (Ibrahim and Mukhtar, 2016). Therefore, this paper will try to assess the role of kidnapping for ransom as a source of terrorism financing in Nigeria using this social exchange theory.

Research Review:

Yusuf and Abdullahi, (2020) studied the cause of kidnapping and its implication on Nigeria; the study aims to explore the national security and socioeconomic implications of the menace. They found that the government's reluctance to address such challenges is the force igniting heinous crimes in the country. It is due to the negligence of the Nigerian government to address the root-causes of the phenomenon such as; youths unemployment, quick-money syndrome, hard-drug influence, and others. Egbegi, et al, (2019) looked at policy flaws and kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria and found that while there has been an uptick in

kidnapping crime, there are no meaningful policy provisions to end or improve the problem in Nigeria despite the fact that provisions exist within Nigeria’s legal framework. They recommended for honest and deeper examination to uncover those socio-cultural elements which have distorted and disoriented our once cherished value system. They also recommended for policy on sanction directed at kidnapping is one that should be approached both coolly and dispassionately. Emanemua and Akinlosotu, (2016) had also made a critical look at kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria, its implications and the quest for a permanent solution. The study indicated that kidnapping for ransom is a criminal offence against the fundamental human rights of citizens that would require proactive and prompt response of security operatives to curb it. However, the study was concluded by recommending good governance as the key to resolving insecurity threat like kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria.

Mcro, et al., (2015), also studied kidnapping for ransom and came up with a result that regards kidnapping for ransom as a predatory crime carried out mostly by criminal organizations, they said it is a salient phenomenon in many regions of the world. It causes serious harm not only to victims and their families but also to private and social capital. They suggested outlawing ransom payment because it reduces the frequency of the offense, but may open the possibility of unintended consequences in terms of fatalities and duration of abduction. Andrew, (2017) studied kidnapping and the limits of acceptance (by local community to humanitarian agencies). He argued that in some contexts, the acceptance strategy no longer works, because of the increasing severity of the kidnapping risk which has overwhelmed the usefulness of ‘normal’ non-deterrence and non-protection-oriented security measures such as acceptance. He also reviewed the dangers of relying on deterrence measures for humanitarian organizations in such sensitive contexts.

Barber, (2016) studied the Australian legal position concerning ransom payments to terrorist organizations. He concluded by suggesting that Australia and the international community should not alter their no-ransom policy, instead family members in this situation should be given the full support of government departments. This includes a clear dialogue about their legal liability, defenses and prosecution strategies which recognize that the prosecution of family members does not satisfy the public interest. Inyang and Ubong, (2013) also studied social problem of kidnapping and its implications on the socio-economic development of Nigeria using Uyo metropolis as a case study. They argued that kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria is often associated with youth unemployment. They made use of the acknowledged adage, which says that “an idle man is a devil’s workshop” to present the situation of unemployment in Nigeria. Many idle young persons have ventured into criminal activities of which kidnapping and abduction is not an exemption. They recommended youths empowerment and more jobs creation in both public and private sectors as a solution to the challenge.

Bello and Jamilu, (2017) had analyzed the causes and consequences of kidnapping in Nigeria; they examined the nexus between terrorism and kidnapping, investigated the mutual reinforcement between corruption and kidnapping, and they also answered the question ‘if kidnapping and poverty are correlated?’ and examined the consequences of the problem. They used secondary qualitative data and found out that kidnapping has been taking place in Nigeria due to activities of insurgent groups in the Niger Delta region, but increase with the emergence of “Boko Haram” terrorism in the North-eastern Nigeria; they also found out that corruption is not strongly related to kidnapping, but have indirect connection whereby youths political thugs served corrupt political leaders and turned out to become kidnapers, sometimes for ransom from

political opponents. However, they found out that poverty correlated with kidnapping in Nigeria; and there are multiple consequences of kidnapping, such as financial victimization, rape and death of victims. Considering the existing literatures that examined the nexus between terrorism and kidnapping for ransom, this paper will further establish and prove the strong correlation that exist between kidnapping for ransom and terrorism financing.

Conceptual Frame Work:

The word *Kidnapping* may have several meanings depending on the constituted laws, category of people involved (including the victims and the perpetrators) in the operation and the motives of the perpetrators (Emanemua and Akinlosotu, 2016). However, Ngwama (2014) defines kidnapping as false imprisonment that involves confinement of individuals illegally against their will by another individual in such a way that it violates the victim’s right to be free from the restraint of movement. Yusuf and Abdullahi (2020) argue that kidnapping in some parts of Nigeria is considered by politicians as a tool against their political rivals, with the motive of distracting the opposition and force them off the track with regard to their elections. Also, Kidnapping is defined as the wholesale taking away of a person against their will often to confine the person in false imprisonment illegally with the principal motives to extract *ransom* from the victim’s family, business or government or to compel the victim’s family or government to do something (Ottuh and Aituf, 2014).

‘Ransom’ as stated in the definition of Ottuh and Aituf (2014) is the basis of this research work, therefore there is a need to better understand the actual meaning of the word in this context. According to Cambridge Dictionary, the word *ransom* is defined as a large amount of money that is demanded in exchange for someone who has been taken prisoner, or sometimes for an animal. Collins CUBUILD Advance learner’s Dictionary

defined ransom as the money that has to be paid to someone so that they will set free a *kidnapped* person that is in their custody.

However, there is a need to also understand the term *terrorism financing* for the purpose of better comprehension of this research work. According to Freeman (2011), terrorism financing has no universally accepted definition and interpretation; this is because terrorist groups have several networks and mediums through which they fund their operations. Although, Kangdim et al., (2020) said terrorism financing refers to the sources used by terrorist groups to fund their activities. Terrorism financing simply means the provision of funds or providing financial support to individual terrorists or non-state actors (Lin, 2016). A report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) published on their official website argued that terrorism financing encompasses the means and methods used by terrorist groups to fund their activities; the means and methods could be legitimate, for example, profits from business proceeds and charitable organizations, and it could also be illegitimate that include *kidnapping for ransom* and trafficking in weapons, drugs or people.

Kidnapping for Ransom in Nigeria:

Adeola, (2012) stated that Nigeria accounted for a quarter of kidnap for ransom in the international report in the year 2011, and that the country had been designated as the global capital for kidnap for ransom because of the huge record of kidnap cases reported in the country annually. A report on the official website of Premium Times Nigeria on August 13, 2022 cited SBM Intelligence reported in 2020 that between June 2011 and end of March 2020, kidnappers received at least \$18.34 million in Nigeria as ransom. The actual figure might be much higher than was reported but the report stuck to only what could be verified. The report also said at least

500 kidnapping incidents, 3,420 people were abducted with 546 persons killed between July 2021 and June 2022 in incidence associated with abductions; within the same period the security report said that \$9.9 million was demanded as ransom by kidnappers but only \$1.2 million was paid for the release of their victims.

One of the worst kidnapping incidents that happen in 2022 was the Kaduna – Abuja train attack which occurred on the 28 of March 2022 at Dutse forest in Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State. Daily Trust reported on their official website published on Wednesday 30 March, 2022 that the train was forced to a halt by the explosion of the bombs planted on the rail tracks by the terrorists; after which the attackers surrounded the coaches and sporadically opened fire before gaining access into the coaches and forced some travelers – about 61 of them – out of the coaches into the nearby bushes, about eight passengers were shot dead, several sustained injuries and were taken to the 44 Nigerian Army Reference Hospital in Kaduna. A cumulated of billions of naira was reported to have been paid at intervals as ransom in securing the release of the kidnapped trained victims.

Analysis of Kidnapping for Ransom in Nigeria:

Punch news paper in Nigeria reported in their official website on 23rd July 2022 that a cumulative of over ₦13 billion have been paid to non-state actors as ransom between June 2011 and July 2022. However, we have also a lot of unreported incidence were ransoms had been paid to secure the release of kidnapped persons. Hence, for the purpose of this research, we summarize the analysis of the ransom paid in Nigeria within the stipulated years in a table for better understanding.

Table 1: Analysis of Ransom paid between 2020 and 2022 in Nigeria

S/N	Date	Incidence of Kidnapping	Ransom Paid
1	November, 2020	Securing the release of schoolchildren in five separate mass kidnapping in the North-West	\$2.4m
2	May 29, 2021	Aggrieved parents of the abducted Green Field University secured the release of their children	₦150m and 8 motorcycles
3		Abducted pupils of Tanko Salihu Islamic School, Tagina, in Rafi L.G.A of Niger State	₦50m
4	July 2, 2021	Kidnapping of an Abuja Hotelier, and 8 others	₦15m
5	February 21, 2022	Gunmen kidnapped a nursing mother in Ogun State and her family secure her release	₦3m
6	March 22, 2022	The family of the wife of a supermarket owner in Lokoja Ugochukwu Okpala secure her release	₦5m
7	April 7, 2022	The family of Bank of Agriculture MD, Ali-Hassan secure his release from the kidnapers of the train passengers	₦100m
8	April 19, 2022	Six family members of the newly elected councilor of Yangoji in Kwali Area Council of FCT Idris Ibrahim, their abductors refused to set the victims free despite collecting ransom	₦2m
9	June 4, 2022	Abduction of Methodist Prelate, Kanu-Uche, and 2 others	₦100m
10	June 4, 2022	Bandits killed a lecturer in Zamfara State after collecting ransom.	₦5m
11	July, 16, 2022	Release of 7 train passengers	₦800m

Source: Punch News paper, published online July 23, 2022

However, as at the time of filing the report, the remaining victims of the abducted train passengers have not been released, and the report estimated about N4.3 billion to be paid for their release (Punch, 2022). Table 1 above shows how terrorists generate huge sum from the families of kidnapped victims and the government as well. Therefore, this explains how extraordinary lucrative kidnapping for ransom has become in Nigeria.

Kidnapping for Ransom as Terrorism Financing:

Terrorists especially in Nigeria have now adopted kidnapping for ransom as a major source of revenue, and they use the revenue to finance their terrorist activities. Acharya et al., (2009) argued that terrorists often fund their activities by engaging in numerous networks of transnational criminal activities that involve extortion, *kidnapping for ransom*, smuggling of contraband and counterfeit goods and other forms of crimes. Kidnapping for ransom has now become a vital form of financing for terrorist groups; it is reportedly the second greatest source of financing terrorism, falling just behind direct

state sponsorship; ransom payments are always in the hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars with the potential to finance large-scale deadly terrorist attacks (Barber, 2016). In 2009, the Inspector General of Police in Nigeria was quoted as saying that between 2008 and 2009 about 130 people were abducted in Nigeria and about N15 billion have been paid as ransom to the kidnappers. They use the ransom to purchase more ammunitions and weapons (Inyang, 2009). Joe and Drew, (2021) affirmed that terrorist groups encamped in Nigeria Rugu forest terrorizing and kidnapping civilians including hundreds of schoolchildren have raised millions of dollars to build an arsenal of heavy weaponry which they use to wrest control of swaths of the north including the president home state.

Daily Trust reported on their official website on 26 October, 2021 cited the Kaduna State 2021 third quarter security report, that the major source of funding for the bandits terrorizing its residents is ransom collected from relatives of hostages. The report also disclosed how bandits expend the money made through their activities to include purchase of more arms, ammunitions and food. They also use the money to procure logistics and medical aid, buying of psychotropic substances (drugs), and maintenance of marabouts that provide “spiritual support for success” in their operations. Another report by the Council of Foreign Relations (CFR) published on their official website on February 18, 2021 stated that in recent time, kidnappers in Nigeria are after ransom, and the authorities always deny paying ransom; yet they do so. For instance, the schoolboys and the bandits involved in the Kankara abduction contradicted official denials that ransom was paid. Reports suggest that Katsina State government paid ₦30 million to secure the release of the schoolboys. Leaders of several terrorist groups ranging from the bandits operating in the northwest and Boko Haram operating mostly in the north east were seen in different viral videos affirming that they use the

ransom collected from families of victims to purchase more weapons and ammunitions to sustain their criminal activities. Kidnapping in Nigeria and across sahel is an extraordinarily lucrative enterprise. Thus, Kidnapping for ransom is indeed providing funding and manpower for terrorist groups; therefore, this explains the reason behind the persistent growing rate of the act in Nigeria.

Legislations on paying Ransom in Nigeria:

The Nigerian Senate, on April 27, 2022 passed a bill imposing jail terms of at least 15 years for paying a ransom to free someone who has been kidnapped, and made abduction punishable by death in cases where victims die. The bill which amends the country’s law, prescribes death penalty for convicted kidnappers where the abduction leads to loss of life, and life imprisonment in other cases (Reuters, 2022). The government in their quest in justifying the bill, argue that if the bill is assented to by the president, it would save Nigeria from being included among countries in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Grey List with its attendant negative consequences, which might ultimately result in international sanctions that would impair the image of the country; and the bill will as well eliminate the major source of finance to the terrorist (Tribune, 2022). In this situation families of hostage victims are forced to make difficult decisions to secure the safe release of their loved ones. Unfortunately, there is no provision in respect of the measures to be taken to free abductees from captivity, which would relieve families of victims from the risk of serving 15 years jail term for paying ransom (Barber, 2016). Despite the government efforts in designating the bandit groups as “terrorists” in early 2022 under the Terrorism Act, the country is still witnessing a rising spate of kidnapping for ransom (GCRP, 2022).

Conclusion:

This research work has proved that kidnapping for ransom is another major source of terrorism financing failing second after direct state sponsorship (Acharya et al.,

2009). Much evidences in this research has shown that the state and the families of victims in Nigeria pay billions of naira to terrorist organizations as ransom within a short period of time, which explained how extraordinary lucrative kidnapping for ransom has become. And that is the major reason why the state is yet to crush the menace. This makes the rate of kidnapping to keep on rising exponentially across the country, because the perpetrators often generate huge sum via collecting ransom and using the money to finance much more deadly terror attacks against the society and the government as well.

Solutions/Recommendations:

Based on the findings of this research work, to tackle this menace of kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria, we recommend the followings:

1. Effective enforcement on the legislation that prohibits paying ransom to terrorist organizations; this will help in making the act of kidnapping for ransom unattractive to terrorists and will discourage them from carrying out more attacks.
2. The government must create a mechanism that will give family of victim relief and hope for reuniting with their loved ones, and this is in addition to the effort of the government in freeing abducted persons which must be taken with all seriousness.
3. Security operatives must have adequate public relations, because it is through that we can get more intelligence information and such information can be used to prevent more kidnapping incidence.
4. The government has to do more in the issue of youths empowerment, we must engage our youths, give them resources that will help them grow in business and other aspect of self reliance. This will help in diverting their thinking from any negative inclination to a positive inclination.

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