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LOCAL SECURITY OUTFITS AND SECURITY CHALLENGES IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The increasing rate of insecurity in Nigeria including kidnapping, armed robbery, cultism and other violent crimes has continually challenged the efficacy of the traditional security agencies in the protection of lives and property. This development has given rise to the formation of local security organizations that complement the existing security structures. The study examined the role of the Western Nigeria Security Network (Amotekun) in addressing security challenges in Nigeria with emphasis on Ogun State Amotekun Corps, Yewa South Branch. Specifically, the study examined

the effectiveness of Amotekun in crime prevention, intelligence gathering and community security management. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and used both primary and secondary data sources. The study population was 230 operatives of the Ogun State Amotekun Corps, Yewa South Branch. The sample size was determined by using the Taro Yamane formula, which resulted in 146 respondents. A total of 143 valid questionnaires were collected and analyzed. Secondary data were collected from the relevant books, research papers, government documents and official records. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistical methods.

The findings revealed that Amotekun has added a lot of value to security through effective gathering of intelligence, surveillance of communities, prompt response to security threats and partnership with the traditional security forces. The study found that the organization is widely supported by the public because of its knowledge of local communities and geography. But its effectiveness is still hampered by inadequate funding, lack of logistics and operational constraints. The research concluded that Amotekun as a crucial complementary security outfit in tackling local security challenges. The study recommended increased resource allocation, improved logistics, ongoing training and strengthened partnerships with conventional security agencies for improved operational efficacy.

Keywords: Local Security Outfit, Security Challenges, Community Policing, Crime Prevention, Amotekun Corps,

Background to the Study

Security is a basic requirement for the existence, stability and development of any society. It offers security to lives and property, stimulates economic activities, promotes political stability and enhances social cohesion. In Nigeria, the issue of security has become a big problem because of the increasing rate of criminal activities such as kidnapping, armed robbery, banditry, terrorism, cultism and communal conflicts. These security challenges have continued to threaten national development and have also eroded public confidence in the institutions of government responsible for the maintenance of law and order (Alemika, 2019).

Historically, federal security agencies, especially the Nigeria Police Force, have been burdened with internal security in Nigeria. The deficiencies in the centralized policing system have been

exposed by the growing complexity and frequency of security threats in the country. The failure of conventional security agencies to respond to new security challenges has resulted in popular demand for alternative security frameworks to complement existing agencies (Onifade, Imhonopi, & Urim, 2013).

The South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria which comprises Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti States has been known as one of the most peaceful places in Nigeria. However, there has been a major rise in criminal activities in the region over the last decade. There is an increase in cases of kidnapping along major highways, armed robbery, herder-farmer clashes, ritual killings and cult clashes and attacks on farming communities. The insecurity is worsened by the invasion of forested areas and border towns by criminal elements, thus instilling fear in the people and destabilizing socio-economic activities (Akinyetun, 2021).

The increasing security challenges within the region prompted state governments and community leaders to explore alternative means of addressing insecurity. In reaction to this, the six South-West state governors, through the Western Nigeria Governors' Forum, set up the Western Nigeria Security Network (WNSN), otherwise known as the Amotekun Corps, in January 2020. The establishment of Amotekun was a significant stride in the direction of community-based and regional security administration to complement the efforts of federal security agencies in crime prevention and control (Adebayo, 2021).

The Amotekun Corps was conceived as a local security outfit designed to utilize indigenous knowledge, local intelligence, and community participation in combating criminal activities. The outfit was expected to bridge the gap between security agencies and local communities by leveraging the familiarity of its operatives with local languages, cultures, and geographical terrains. Through intelligence gathering, surveillance, patrol operations, and collaboration with conventional security agencies, Amotekun seeks to enhance security and maintain public order across the South-West region (Akinwale, 2021).

The emergence of Amotekun is a reflection of a larger global trend towards community policing and decentralized security governance. Community policing is a form of cooperation between law enforcement agencies and local communities in order to identify and solve security problems. According to the researchers, the engagement of the locals in the management of security boosts the gathering of intelligence and fosters trust between the citizens and the security organizations

(Bayley, 2006). The establishment of Amotekun is an attempt to institutionalize community based security in the Nigerian security architecture.

The potential of local security organizations to respond to contemporary security challenges remains an academic debate. Some studies say that Amotekun has played a big role in reducing crime and gathering intelligence, while others say that structural and operational limitations have hampered its ability to achieve its full objectives. Therefore, there is the need for empirical study to explore the role of local security outfits in addressing security challenges in the South-West region of Nigeria.

The study seeks to examine local security organizations and security challenges in South-West Nigeria with special emphasis on Amotekun Corps. The aim of this study is to measure the contributions, effectiveness, challenges, and future potential of local security initiatives in promoting peace, safety, and sustainable development in the region.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the current security challenges confronting South-West Nigeria.
2. To examine the duties and functions of the Amotekun Corps in combating insecurity in South-West Nigeria.
3. To investigate the level of collaboration between the Amotekun Corps and conventional security agencies in crime prevention and control.
4. To identify the challenges facing the Amotekun Corps in the discharge of its security responsibilities.

Literature Review

Concept of Security

Security is a complex concept that aims at protecting lives, property, institutions and national values from threats that may undermine social stability and development. Until recently, security was primarily understood in military terms, protecting the country's territory from external threats. Modern scholars have expanded the concept to include protection from internal threats such as

crime, terrorism, communal conflicts, kidnapping and other kinds of violence that threaten the wellbeing of citizens (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013).

Security has been defined by Barry Buzan (1991) as “the attempt to establish freedom from threats and the ability of states and societies to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity” Security is a precondition for sustainable development, since economic growth, political stability and social cohesion cannot thrive in an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. The rising insecurity in Nigeria is a big problem to governance, economic activities and the confidence of the public in state institutions.

Concept of Local Security Outfits

Local security organizations are community or regionally based organizations created to supplement official security agencies in the performance of law and order functions. They are generally composed of people with a good knowledge of the local environment, culture and language, thus enhancing intelligence gathering and accelerating responses to security threats.

The intensification of security problems could no longer be adequately handled by centralized security institutions and local security measures developed. Internationally, community involvement in security management is recognized as an effective strategy for preventing crime and resolving conflicts (Alemika, 2019). In Nigeria, local security bodies include vigilante groups, hunters’ associations, neighbourhood watches, and regional security bodies such as Amotekun in the South-West and other community-based security initiatives in various regions.

The rationale behind local security outfits is rooted in the principle of community policing, which emphasizes collaboration between citizens and security agencies in identifying and addressing security concerns. Such arrangements provide grassroots intelligence that may not be readily available to conventional security agencies.

Security Challenges in South-West Nigeria

The South-West zone of Nigeria has experienced serious security challenges in recent years. This is despite its long-standing status as one of the most peaceful zones in the country. The magnitude and intensity of criminal activities are growing, creating concerns for governments, businesses and citizens.

Kidnapping

In the South-West, kidnapping has emerged as a very serious security threat. Criminal gangs abduct people for ransom in forests, on highways and in remote communities. The rise in kidnapping has hindered economic activities and created fear among residents and travelers (Akinyetun, 2021). Transportation is becoming more and more dangerous as many cases of abduction have been witnessed on most of the major roads linking Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ondo, Osun and Ekiti States. The financial and psychological effects of kidnapping have had a tremendous impact on victims and their families.

Armed Robbery

Armed robbery continues to be a major concern in both the urban and rural areas of the South-West. Criminal groups prey on homes, businesses, financial institutions, and travelers. The complexity of criminal networks remains a serious threat to public safety, despite the efforts of security agencies.

Herder-Farmer Conflicts

The insecurity in the South-West is largely due to the ongoing clash between herders and farmers. Such disputes are often over grazing routes, crop damage and water availability. Okoli and Atelhe (2014) report that these conflicts have led to loss of lives, destruction of property and displacement of rural communities.

Cultism and Gang Violence

Cult activities are becoming more prevalent among young people, especially in urban areas and higher education institutions. Violent clashes occur between rival cult factions, leading to injuries, deaths, and property damage. These activities greatly increase insecurity and social instability.

Forest-Based Criminal Activities

Many criminal groups utilize forest reserves as operational bases for kidnapping, illegal mining, arms trafficking, and other criminal enterprises. The vast and poorly monitored forests in parts of the South-West provide safe havens for criminals and complicate security operations.

Emergence of Amotekun Corps

The increasing wave of insecurity in the South-West led to the establishment of the Western Nigeria Security Network (WNSN), popularly known as Amotekun Corps, in January 2020. The initiative was launched by the six governors of the South-West region as a regional response to escalating security threats.

Amotekun was established to complement the efforts of conventional security agencies through intelligence gathering, community surveillance, conflict management, and rapid response operations. The outfit derives its strength from local knowledge and community participation, enabling it to identify and address security threats more effectively than centralized security institutions operating from distant locations (Akinwale, 2021).

Following its establishment, each South-West state put in place legal structures to regularize the corps' activities and to specify its powers and duties.

Roles of Amotekun in Addressing Security Challenges

Intelligence Gathering

One of the primary functions of Amotekun is intelligence gathering. Operatives collect information from local communities regarding suspicious movements, criminal activities, and emerging security threats. This intelligence assists security agencies in preventing crimes before they occur.

Community Policing

Amotekun operates within the framework of community policing. The familiarity of operatives with local languages, traditions, and social structures facilitates cooperation between security personnel and community members.

Protection of Rural Communities

The corps plays a significant role in protecting rural communities and farmlands from criminal attacks. Regular patrols and surveillance activities help deter criminal activities and improve public confidence in security institutions.

Crime Prevention and Control

Amotekun participates in crime prevention through patrol operations, arrests of suspected criminals, rescue of kidnapping victims, and collaboration with other security agencies. The outfit

has been credited with contributing to the reduction of certain criminal activities in several communities.

Conflict Resolution

The corps also assists in managing local disputes and preventing conflicts from escalating into violence. Through mediation and community engagement, Amotekun contributes to social harmony and peaceful coexistence.

Challenges Facing Amotekun Corps

Inadequate Funding

Financial constraints affect personnel welfare, procurement of equipment, logistics, and operational efficiency.

Limited Operational Equipment

The corps often lacks advanced security technologies, communication gadgets, surveillance equipment, and modern transportation facilities required for effective operations.

Legal and Constitutional Constraints

The centralized nature of Nigeria's policing system has generated debates regarding the constitutional legitimacy and operational powers of regional security outfits.

Poor Inter-Agency Collaboration

Although Amotekun collaborates with conventional security agencies, coordination challenges sometimes hinder effective information sharing and joint operations.

Political Interference

Political influence in recruitment, deployment, and operational decisions may affect professionalism and public trust.

Human Rights Concerns

There are concerns regarding accountability mechanisms and adherence to human rights standards during security operations, necessitating continuous training and oversight.

Theoretical Framework: Community Policing Theory

This study is anchored on the Community Policing Theory. The theory emphasizes active collaboration between security agencies and local communities in crime prevention and public safety management. Community policing encourages information sharing, trust-building, and citizen participation in identifying and resolving security challenges.

According to Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1990), community policing promotes partnerships that improve the effectiveness of security institutions by utilizing local knowledge and community support. The establishment of Amotekun reflects the principles of community policing because it relies on local intelligence, community engagement, and collaborative security management to address insecurity in South-West Nigeria.

Empirical Review

Akinwale (2021) found that Amotekun significantly improved intelligence gathering and community participation in crime prevention across South-West Nigeria. The study concluded that local security initiatives can complement conventional security agencies in addressing insecurity.

Akinyetun and Osoba (2022) examined the effectiveness of Amotekun and reported that the outfit contributed to crime reduction, enhanced public confidence, and improved security surveillance. However, the study identified funding and operational challenges as major obstacles to effectiveness.

Aremu and Ibrahim (2022) investigated regional security initiatives in Nigeria and found that local security outfits improve response time to security threats due to their familiarity with local environments. Nevertheless, the authors emphasized the need for stronger legal frameworks and better inter-agency cooperation.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that while Amotekun has contributed positively to security management in South-West Nigeria, significant challenges remain. This study therefore seeks to further examine the role of local security outfits in addressing security challenges and to identify measures for enhancing their effectiveness.

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	12.864	.439		29.288	.000
VV1	.111	.038	.243	2.960	.004

a. Dependent Variable: V3

b. Predictors: (constant), V1

Decision: The p-value of VV1 is 0.004 which is less than 0.05% level of significance. This means Amotekun security outfit is statistically significant challenges in curbing kidnapping in Southwestern Nigeria. This denoted that we reject null hypothesis and conclude that There are challenges facing Amotekun Security outfits in Curbing Kidnapping in Southwestern Nigeria

Conclusion

The six governors of the South West area of Nigeria made the right decision in forming the operation Amotekun security group. This step marked the start of regionalism, restructuring, and true federation. Every region should provide security and look out for its own interests. Based on the aforementioned results, the study came to the conclusion that the South West Governments' creation of Amotekun as a regional security force to combat crime and thwart herdsmen invasions in their region violates the 1999 Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution. Because of this, it is not legally able to regulate internal security and lower crime in the South West of Nigeria. The study also discovered that Amotekun Security organizations struggle to reduce kidnapping in southwest Nigeria because they lack contemporary weapons, have limited budget, and have inadequate regional policing infrastructure.

Recommendations

In order to assess the effectiveness of Amotekun security outfit in reducing kidnapping in the South West region of Nigeria, this study has produced the following recommendations.

i. The Amotekun should be the remedy for the average person in South-West Yorubaland and

serve as a guide against all the problems that were linked to the nation's security system and caused them to fail.

iii. As long as regional security organizations are operating within the bounds of the law, the federal government, through its centralized security system, particularly the police and army, should train them in the safe handling of firearms and constitutional best practices in the fight against insurgencies and other crimes that have hampered the expansion of socioeconomic activities in the nation.

iv. To enable them to operate at their best and to the satisfaction of the state government and its citizens, the regional security organizations should receive sufficient funding from the state governments.

v. The Nigeria Police Force and the governors of Southwest Nigeria must collaborate to create an escape plan for Amotekun agents. Their integration into the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) or a gradual phase-out of Amotekun Corps within a predetermined number of years, accompanied by a reorientation of its recruits into civilian life, are two possible exit strategies.

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