

EVOLUTION AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ECONOMY OF RANSOMING IN NIGERIA SINCE THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Introduction: Conceptualizing “Ransoming” in the Nigerian Context

The idea of “ransoming” is not completely strange to Nigerians; what seems quite novel is its new meaning. Indeed, the coalescence of the realities of this “new meaning” makes for a better understanding of why Nigeria was listed as the eighth among ten most affected countries by “economic kidnapping” in 1999.¹ Economic kidnapping are those with economic motivations, only realizable through ransoming. A decade later, as the spate of kidnapping for ransom intensified, the country became one of the “kidnapping capitals of the world.”² It was also listed by the Control Risks Group, an independent, global risk consultancy, as the world’s number one kidnapping hotspot in 2010.³ Indeed, may be more than anywhere else in the world since the late twentieth century, the phenomenon of kidnapping for ransom has become a vibrantly lucrative industry in Nigeria. An important clarification about ransoming in modern Nigeria is that it goes hand-in-glove with kidnapping and hostage-taking. However, it is noteworthy that though this kind of relationship exists, these phenomena are not always directly related.

For the purposes of our present discussion, ransoming is defined as the demand of some payment of sort, either in cash or kind, in exchange for an abductee, either a person or something, often held in disadvantaged position. While it is habitually a further step of initial crime(s), usually kidnapping and hostage-taking, it is the act that often reveals the underlying motives behind the tripartite crime saga. Three factors are important in understanding the ransoming act: (1) abduction, often by force (2) making demand(s), and (3) payment for demand(s) made, if “successful.” Correspondingly, three respective parties are involved: the abductee(s), the abductor(s), and the ransom payer(s). In addition, one or more of three motives, political,

ideological or financial, often underlie ransoming. While in reality financial motives may be conveniently masked by other factors, the money from ransoms, if the ransom act is successful, may be used to fund political and/or ideological activities. Thus, all too often the lines between different motives are blurred and/or interlinked.⁴

Two contending perspectives exist regarding ransoming in Nigeria. On the one hand, it is perceived as an instrument for or a form of “coercive diplomacy” – something that is used to compel the other party/parties to accept or take a given course of action in a given political situation. It can be said to be a form of “legitimate behavior” especially where it is used as a last resort, that is, when all other diplomatic avenues and strategies have been explored without success. Indeed, this was the opinion of many sympathizers of the Niger Delta youth insurgency in Nigeria.⁵ Another school of thought, on the other hand, sees it, in whatever guise, as a wholly criminal activity in which criminal perpetrators seek to gain undue advantage in a given circumstance. In other words, whether it is used as a form of coercive diplomacy or employed for pecuniary gains, this perspective considers it unacceptable and condemnable.⁶ The purpose of this paper is two-fold. The first, on the one hand, is to critically examine and present the historical contexts out of which ransoming emerged and proliferated in late 20th century Nigeria. On the other hand, the second is to identify and examine the social, political and economic contingencies that affected it.

Background to the late Twentieth Century

Over the past fifty years since independence (1960), Nigeria has drawn over \$600 billion from its oil revenue.⁷ It has also received over \$400 billion in foreign aid.⁸ These have, unfortunately, not translated into social and economic prosperity for millions of its citizens. Rather, the country, in spite of the immense human and mineral endowments, is in deep poverty, largely due to systemic corruption. The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the mid-1980s, based on stringent conditions that were dictated by the Bretton Woods institutions, also created serious social and economic crisis and exacerbated the conditions of poverty in Nigeria. Furthermore, the country was steeped in decades of corrupt military dictatorships that resulted in the alienation of many citizens. All these created the condition for conflicts and struggle over resource control to fester.⁹

Nigerian youths were born into these unfortunate conditions which affected them in highly complex ways.¹⁰ As a historically constructed social category, as a relational concept, and as a group of actors, the youth form an especially sharp lens through which social forces have been focused in Nigeria. The youth was once seen as the hope of the continent.¹¹ They also appeared as agents in and of themselves, in their own diverse and often highly specific production.¹² However, this group of actors, the youth, became a “problematic category,” trapped as it were in a tragic morass of crime, decadence and “given to sexuality that is unrestrained and threatening to the whole society.” The youth was soon to be labelled as “dangerous,” “criminal,” and “decadent,” and as “lumpen and/or “loose cannons,” thus soon becoming a “social category in crisis.”¹³

The questions arising from this unfortunate scenario are: how were the Nigerian youth organizing and making sense of their daily lives? How did they negotiate their private and public roles and envision their futures? How can we understand the youth in various contexts as both makers and breakers of society, while being simultaneously made and/or broken by that society? Undeniably, the future became rather grim for these young men and women, and within the context of their exclusion, it was only natural that they should become angry, bitter, disenchanting, frustrated and desperate.¹⁴ Through their agency they began carving out a social space in a marginal geography and culture that was resistant to the mainstream or dominant culture.¹⁵

Emergence of Ransoming in late Twentieth Century Nigeria

While these social, political and economic scenarios were virtually the same throughout Nigeria, the Niger Delta region, which began to experience another level of socio-economic and political oppression from the early 1990s, was hardest hit and popular agitations became rampant in the area. Their agitation was for greater inclusion into the scheme of things and they expressed discontent against the Nigerian government, petro-businesses in the area and their own “leaders.” Despite the fact that the Niger Delta accounts for more than 23% of Nigeria’s total population,¹⁶ the region remained very “poor, backward, and neglected,” even fifty-four years after the Willink’s Commission described it thus.¹⁷

The region became the nerve-center of Nigeria’s economy soon after the discovery of crude oil there in 1956 by Shell Darcy. However, due to irresponsible oil and gas exploration, the Niger Delta environment has been severely polluted and devastated. Both the Federal Government and the

multinational oil corporations working in the region have been accused of working in cahoots to marginalize the people. Remarkably, for instance, poverty and unemployment in the area has consistently been higher than the national average. This is in spite of the region's privileged position as the economic honeypot of the nation in terms of crude oil and gas reserve, which account for more than 80% of the nation's Gross National Product.¹⁸

Dissatisfied with this situation, the region's youth intensified their agitations for adequate political representation, an increased and fair share of oil revenues, justice and equity in the management of their affairs and a repair of their degraded environment due to five decades of rapacious oil and gas exploration.¹⁹ Intense agitations in the region began in the early 1990s and were particularly against the Nigerian state and the petro-businesses operating in the region.²⁰ Led by the environmental activist and playwright, Kenule Saro-Wiwa, the agitations were characterized by non-violent protests, rallies, local and international campaigns against the excesses of oil companies and the Nigerian government, sensitization of communities to their rights, amongst others.²¹ The official response of the government was, however, to initiate repressive policies and actions targeting the people through military invasions and occupations, often with mortal consequences. Things came to a head when on 10 November 1995 Saro-Wiwa and eight of his Ogoni kinsmen were hanged by the state after a flawed trial, despite several pleas by the international community. This marked a watershed in the Niger Delta struggles in Nigeria. The agitators resolved to employ new tactics to achieve their ultimate goal.

Following the execution of Saro-Wiwa, the struggles, activism and agitations in the Niger Delta by local *ethnies* and groups against perceived injustices began to intensify, and by 1999 two clear directions in these activities were discernable. The first was the demand of total resource control, political restructuring and self-determination for the Niger Delta region.²² The tactics for realizing this demand degenerated into "militia-zation."²³ This was the second direction. With this, there was an eruption of various militant youth groups apparently manipulated by the region's power elite to actualize their demands. Tonwe *et al* have argued that the militant groups which emerged were a mix of ideologues purportedly representing the development aspirations of the people.²⁴ Popular among the militant groups were the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Niger Delta Vigilante Service (NDV), and Coalition of Militant Action of the Niger Delta (COMA), to mention but a few.²⁵ In 1999 and with these

developments, full-scale armed rebellion, or what some termed “coercive diplomacy,” directed against the Nigerian state and petrobusinesses, ensued, thus signaling a new phase in the history of the peoples’ struggle.

Rebellion is seen as a form of organized crime because it thrives only through predatory activities. One of such activities is ransom kidnapping and which youths in the Niger Delta exploited to the fullest. Indeed, this development was expedient for two specific reasons. Firstly, as Bannon and Collier noted, there is always the need for “the organization” (in this case, the rebellion) to be “viable,” that is, solvent fund wise.²⁶ As not just political organizations with a focus on pursuing social change, but also military and business organizations, rebel groups face enormous challenges, including “problems of recruitment, cohesion, equipment, and survival.”²⁷ Thus, rebellions are faced with huge financing problems as several people (the rebels) would need to be fed, clothed and housed. Also, some operational activities would be financed, including arms purchase. So, as revenue does not accrue directly from military activities, rebel groups’ survival as military and business organizations will have to depend on engaging in criminal activities.²⁸

In the specific experience of youths in the Niger Delta, financing rebel activities came at the same “criminal cost.” In addition to financial commitments by the local elite, as well as the imposition of illegal levies on road users, property developers and project contractors in the region, ransom kidnapping was a very notable tactic adopted by the groups.²⁹ Initially, it began as a local strategy by native communities in Bayelsa and Rivers states who captured oil workers to force the affected companies to either make redress or pay certain kinds of compensation(s) to aggrieved communities and/or persons before their abducted workers were released.³⁰ The tactic was eventually “hijacked” by the militant groups, whose members, I suspect, were also behind the same acts during the initial native communities’ struggles. Essentially, ransom kidnapping became, as it were, an important means of “sustaining” the rebellion in the region.³¹

Secondly, ransom kidnapping became convenient as a coercive diplomacy tactic. It was an effort to voice out and/or publicize the grievances, frustrated emotions and unacceptable conditions of the region’s peoples to the world; “a mechanism to draw attention to the unfair treatment of that area in respect of petroleum mining activities, fiscal federalism and low level development manifesting in poor livelihood conditions.”³² Thus, it was a way of “fighting back,” of expressing displeasure, anger and disappointment in the Nigerian project, triggered by the socio-economic and

political circumstances discussed earlier. Omotola aptly captures this expediency:

Having exploited all peaceful avenues, including peaceful demonstrations and protests, media and publicity propagandas, direct dialogue and engagement with the State and/or the oil firms, etc but to no avail, the Niger Delta people felt as at that time the best option they had was to resort to 'coercive diplomacy.'³³

Accordingly, persons were frequently kidnapped and ransomed by these groups in order to create international awareness concerning the region's plight, as well as to benefit sufficiently from what was going on in their land.

But there is a fundamental question about this course of action. For instance, if one claims to be fighting a liberation struggle, why kidnap people, keep them hostage and make ransoms out of such situations? To be sure, kidnapping and hostage taking are treated as criminal activities in international law. Neither are they condoned by any national legal framework. This remains a critical problematic for those who choose to advance the "liberation struggle" school of thought for the Niger Delta militant groups. However, because of the fluidities of the boundaries between crime and struggle, these militants were able to legitimize these criminal activities in the name of the struggle. They also were able to legitimize such activities in the name of trying to take what rightfully belonged to them. Noting the significance of their actions in this direction, a former member of one of the groups opined:

We believed that the only language these oil companies, the government and the entire world would listen to and understand was 'violence' and 'force'. These always get you the attention you want, demand and deserve. Can't you see it worked? Or did it not? That's simple.³⁴

The petrobusinesses became the original targets of these groups' ransom kidnapping activities. However, it was not just "anybody" in these companies was kidnapped. As Alexander and Klein clearly indicated, these militants were not just well-organized, but were equally very selective in their "target" hostages due to the singular objective of their mission.³⁵ Thus, petrobusinesses were targeted not just because they were perceived as the main exploiters, but also because there was a preponderant of foreigners working in these companies. In other words, for the militants, it was not just that "only foreigners were worth more money."³⁶ But it was also because only such violent acts against them would send the urgent and desperate messages to the appropriate quarters the perpetrators wanted. Thus,

foreigners were taken hostage and ransomed, either for money or for some other specific demand(s), from either the petrobusinesses or the government. This activity became very popular and viable within a short period. This was the “Type I” Niger Delta variant.

These groups operated a sophisticated network.³⁷ Thus, the rate of success, as well as the frequency and intensity of such events, was relatively high, despite the security measures put in place by both the government and petrobusinesses to check them. Over the next few years, the Niger Delta region was to witness an unprecedented prevalence of ransom kidnapping of foreigners. For instance, between January and December 2006 a total of 24 incidents, involving 118 hostages, were recorded.³⁸ Similarly, Shell Petroleum Development Corporation (SPDC) alone claimed that 133 of its staff were kidnapped between 2006 and 2008.³⁹ Interestingly, though these groups showed considerable daredevilry in their action and were also courageous enough to claim responsibility for their criminality,⁴⁰ it was observed that it something of honour for them not to injure or mistreat their captives, at least in any way that would be considered “inhuman.”⁴¹ Nevertheless, a few victims were hurt and some lives were lost.

So, who were the youths – perpetrators of this ransoming crime? In official circles they were considered “criminal elements,” as Nigeria’s President Umaru Yar’Adua affirmed in an interview in which he challenged the militants’ claim that their insurgency was a grievance-based protest and liberation movement.⁴² They were “notably, able bodied young men usually armed with sophisticated weapons.”⁴³ In other words, they were only a part of the abandoned, frustrated, and angry Nigerian youths described earlier in this paper. Apparently, the weapons used by these insurgents came from some political elite who clearly but covertly supported the insurgency. Thus, these insurgents can be said to be well connected politically and communally. We must make no mistakes about this: the insurgency was very popular in the region and to a large extent, had community sanction. Not only were the insurgents receiving critical assistance and protection, they also operated from amongst the region’s communities.

For instance, the operational bases and hideouts of these groups included “isolated locations in rural communities, strongholds in thick forests and dangerous creeks, rough waterways and unfriendly tide of the high seas.”⁴⁴ These strategic bases belonged to and were well known to the various communities. A typical case in point was in 2008, when Governor Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers state initiated moves designed to check the

activities of the groups. He “ordered” the people of Okrika to give information on one of “their sons,” Ateke Tom, the founder and leader of the notorious militant group, the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV), a break-away faction of the infamous Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Alhaji Dokubo Asari.⁴⁵ Interestingly, no one from the community cooperated with such a directive.⁴⁶ The non-cooperation stemmed from three primary factors. Firstly, there was the fear of victimization and/or reprisals by the groups. Secondly, there was the lack of trust in a government controlled by compromised politicians.⁴⁷ Thirdly, there was communal solidarity for the insurgency – after all, as an indigene of the area noted, “their fight was for us all in the region; thus, it was equally our struggle.”⁴⁸

Changing Trends and Dispersal

Briggs had argued that there seemed very little scope for a “domestic ransom kidnapping business” in Nigeria, especially due to widespread poverty among the people.⁴⁹ However, this reality was to change significantly from about 2007. Two factors were responsible for this transition. The first was the security restructuring in petrobusinesses, which saw a drastic reduction of expatriate staff, the “tightening of security” for those remaining, and the employment of the “settlement culture” in order to get the militants on their side and reduce, if not totally eliminate, their harmful activities. “Settlement culture” involves petrobusinesses paying and arming some militant groups to guard oil wells and installations against vandalism by criminals or other militant groups.⁵⁰ Such security jobs often pitched the contracted group(s) against their less fortunate comrades-at-arms not so “settled” by the petrobusinesses.⁵¹

The second factor was the unfortunate “dividend of Nigerian democracy,” especially towards the run-up to the 2003 general elections. The militias became hatchet men thugs for politicians in the delta region. Indeed, these militants had proven ties with political leaders who organized, mobilized, armed and used them during elections to harass and intimidate political opponents, rig votes and subvert the electoral process in their favor.⁵² They were, however, often abandoned after the politicians had secured political offices.⁵³ Dropping one militant group also meant that another such group was “employed” and armed by the politicians for protection from the former, abandoned one. These also frequently led to violent clashes among groups and often presented an encouragement and viable opportunity for criminal elements and groups to enter the fray.

“Type II” Niger Delta Variant and its Multiplier Effects

It was the dynamics of the failed political system in addition to the tightening of security for expatriates and failure of the petrobusinesses’ “settlement culture” that created the impetus for changes in ransoming. As a result of these developments, ransoming got transformed from a grievance-driven rebellion to a greed-driven venture.⁵⁴ The new form was essentially motivated by monetary profits. The transformation began, first in the Niger Delta, then spread to the South-east, and later, throughout the country. Its commencement in the delta was predictable, at least in view of the conditions of possibility already discussed.

As said above, the militants had connections with, and actually acted as thugs for, the political elite who also armed but never disarm them after the general elections were held, won and/or lost.⁵⁵ Thus, when these politicians “dumped” or abandoned them after the elections, they became in effect standing armies of their own with new political allegiances, agendas and motivations. With the arms, huge ammunition and training at their disposal, they took advantage of the prevalent culture of violence in the region, quickly turning to crime, particularly ransoming. This time, however, they turned their violence against the wealthy local political elite.⁵⁶ This strategy, in the militants’ calculations, was considered right, reckoning that their new target must have acquired a lot of wealth largely through fraud and/or at the expense of the masses.⁵⁷ Thus, they were seen as part of society’s problem. Indeed, due to the complicity of the political elite in such sinister dealings, and with the constant threat of blackmail should things turn around, these militants enjoyed extensive protection from prosecution.⁵⁸ This situation led to further mushrooming of militant youth groups in the region through the mid-2000s. In other words, though foreign nationals were still perceived as prize assets by the militants, this new brand of ransoming targeted high placed authority and society, especially their relatives, including aged people, youths and children, male and female alike. These political elite were considered “ransomable” by virtue of their social statuses. Indeed, it was this rather radical change in context and content that effectively initiated the domestication of ransoming in other Nigerian communities.

Rise of the “South-East Variant”

A few years later, the new ransoming trend began to spread, moving inward, specifically to the South-eastern parts of the country, the Igbo

heartland, and from about 2009 it became a major part of the crime dynamics in the area.⁵⁹ It was in this area that the trend first got truly “localized” and effectively “domesticated.”⁶⁰ Indeed, these reasons made it to be defined as the “South-east variant.” The motive for this variant of the ransom trend, like the Type II Niger Delta variant, was squarely financial gain or profit; nothing more, nothing less.⁶¹ This is very popular among other scholars. For instance, since its localization in this area it has become “a mercantile enterprise,” or “a lucrative business,” or as Osumah and Aghedo referred to it, the “commodification of kidnapping.”⁶² In other words, the eventual “transition” of the dynamics of ransoming in the South-east area undoubtedly underlined it as “a form of investment from which investors expect[ed] optimal returns.”⁶³ The relevant question here is: why was the south-east eventually disproportionately represented in Nigeria’s ransom business, after the initial Niger Delta Experience? Could the reason(s) be found in the sociology of the people? Or perhaps, could it be an unfortunate socio-political and economic fall-out of its people’s civil war experiences? I would axiomatically argue that it is both.

One underlining and indispensable factor for the success of ransoming is the presence of “domestic wealth and prosperity” capable of supporting the business. Indeed, many societies in Africa met this singular demand. Like all businesses and with entrepreneurial flair, the “new” ransom kidnapers adapted their business models and the way they operated in response to, and to fit prevailing market conditions.⁶⁴ According to Nwajiuba, the Igbo, who overwhelmingly dominated the South-eastern part of the country,

learn quickly any successful trade or vocation. When those who went to school emerged the first owners of bicycles and metal roofed houses, they quickly seized the schooling culture and ...exceeded the literacy levels of compatriots on the coast who had several decades of start in access to Western education. When acquaintances became successful in road transport, then everyone around sought to become transporters [sic]. When one became successful in fake and real drugs, that emerged the dream of all around, the same for shoe making, cloth trading, import and export, restaurant and hoteliers, supermarket, etc. ...When it also became fashionable to run away from school and engage in *Otokoto*⁶⁵ activities, *Yahoo*,⁶⁶ 419⁶⁷, etc, the boys moved over. So has it become with the new trade of kidnapping for ransom.⁶⁸

Of course, Nwajiuba’s position is in agreement with Osuntokun’s thinking that “since people in the South-east are traditionally mercantilist and

business people, ransoming seemed to be for them just another business; a quick business through which to make money.”⁶⁹

I would also argue that this was partly a fall-out of the exigencies of post-civil war socio-political economy and realities of the erstwhile secessionist South-east region. With a near-total destruction of the South-east local economy during the war, continued marginalization of the area in the post-war period and “lack of promise” in terms of government socio-economic development, there was necessarily a dissolution and abandonment of the once famed spirit and lofty philosophy of collective brotherhood, epitomized in the *onye aghala nwanneya* (no relative should be left behind) dictum. In its stead, there was the gradual development of the *Ike keta O rie* (“survival of the fittest”) philosophy as a survival strategy, with “every man on his own.” Therefore, even one’s blood brother could prey on one.

One may ask: what exactly could make someone a victim of this new variant? The answer is straightforward, and ultimately linked to the perception of the perpetrators that their victims had “rich people” who would “bail them out” of the situation.

If your children are defined as successful, then you are a target. It is not a vendetta or you do not need to have offended anybody, you just have to be perceived as being capable of paying or having friends and associates who can contribute the money requested. What are the parameters seen as evidence that you can pay? The house you live in, the car you ride, and most painful is that you donate handsomely at community and village events. These are the indices of your “kidnap value” which can be translated into monetary terms.⁷⁰

In addition to this list was ownership of thriving business outfits, or working in establishments known to pay their staff “handsomely well,” like the petrobusinesses, the banking sector, or the telecommunications. In other words, anyone whom the perpetrators believed will be able to attract a “reasonable ransom” could become a victim.⁷¹ Even family members of the perpetrators could become victims too if they met such conditions. Thus, in this new development, the victims expanded to include not just the wealthy and their family members, but just any one, including even toddlers.⁷² Indeed, it was at this stage that the ransoming phenomenon was perfected as a ‘productive tactics’ for money-seeking.

Apart from the lesser cases of self-ransoming and petty “family politics” and intrigues involved in some of these dynamics, as we shall show later, the core criminal perpetrators and conspirators of this South-east variant were also significantly different. The perpetrators included

dubious elements from different walks of life – student cultists, artisans, robbers, the unemployed, “professional fraudsters” and, at least in one instance, an ordained clergy.⁷³ In some instances, these criminals had patrons to whom they made returns, and who, on their own part, gave the culprits the needed protection to operate with impunity.⁷⁴ Indeed, some perpetrators who were arrested had named some of their patrons, which included notable traditional rulers who covertly supported the criminals for protection and pecuniary benefits.⁷⁵ This informed the Abia government’s decision to sack the affected “royal fathers” for alleged complicity in the crime.⁷⁶ Their perpetrators’ networks involved multiple independent but well-organized syndicates.

These perpetrators wielded different kinds of dangerous weapons, which they often threatened to use at the slightest provocation. Due to its violence, the new South-east variant often facilitated other crimes. For example, victims were often robbed, humiliated, assaulted, gagged and/or assailed.⁷⁷ Similarly, female abductees were “frequently subjected to sexual assault or rape.”⁷⁸ This was unlike what was experienced in the Type I Niger Delta variant. Though ransoms demanded were often on a modest scale to ensure the victim’s relatives and friends paid promptly, a strategy referred to as “express kidnapping,” the perpetrators often utilized threats of harm or death to elicit maximum cooperation and to ensure compliance with their demands. If demands were either not paid or not paid in time, or directives given not strictly adhered to, the perpetrators sometimes carried their threats to the shock of all.⁷⁹ As time went on, it was also noted that there was an exponential increase in the level of desperation and ruthlessness exhibited by the perpetrators.⁸⁰

The nature of some ransoming acts in this later development was, however, no more than ludicrous. For instance, in some towns in both Anambra and Abia states, everybody had a “kidnap value,” which could actually be haggled openly on the streets in broad daylight with the perpetrators. In the city of Aba, for instance,

a ‘house boy’ or ‘house girl’ could attract as low as recharge card money which in some cases are #1,500. The kidnappers could then declare that there are ten of them and each needs a card which you should purchase and send them. That amounts to a kidnap value of #15,000 Naira.⁸¹

Without a doubt, these instances clearly underline the upsurge of this crime as desperate acts of survival prompted by poverty and frustration. There was a case of two young men who ransomed their mother in order

to get “good money” out of their elder brother based in the United States of America.⁸² Again, interesting tales of people who ransomed themselves also abound. In one such example, the objective of the young man was to extract from his family members enough money for his personal purposes. He thus arranged with his friends for his kidnap, after which he was ransomed.⁸³ Another equally popular case was that of a man in Lagos who ransomed himself to get huge sums of money from his wife. He was arrested by the police when he attempted to withdraw the funds from the bank.⁸⁴

This later South-east variant accounted for 97% of ransom incidents recorded around the country between mid-2000s and 2012.⁸⁵ I am also strongly convinced that a lot of ransom kidnapping took place at village levels, in which case they were not made public through the media. The reason being, I suspect, that in the case of many families, if the kidnapped persons were not politically exposed and connected, it made no sense for the affected families to publicize such incidents. It made sense, however, for friends and family members to listen carefully to the terms of the ransom, haggle and agree with the culprits on a payable amount soonest, meet those terms as quickly as possible and to keep mute about the incident. Indeed, this was largely the case in the rural areas where this ransom menace was equally frustratingly endemic.⁸⁶

Was this new variant limited only to the South-east? No, it was not; the trend has become widespread throughout the country, though with different prevalence rates. For instance, ransom kidnappings have been widely reported in Lagos, where it has even become an “established business,” and in Ondo, Ekiti, and Oyo states, as well as in Edo, Kano, Kaduna and Abuja.⁸⁷ It has also been reported in the northern parts, especially since 2009 with the upsurge of the *Boko Haram* Islamic insurgency.⁸⁸ However, as Lofkrantz and also Ojo have shown, ransoming is a historical phenomenon in both Northern Nigeria and Yorubaland.⁸⁹ Therefore, this phenomenon has clearly become a nation-wide criminal malaise, the very reason why Abati argued that the entire country had become “a kidnappers’ den.”⁹⁰ In other words, the South-east only became significant within the context of a fledging Nigerian-wide experience, because the variant originated there and the trend became endemic there. This is corroborated by CLEEN 2010 statistics which indicated that the South-east had the highest level of kidnapping in Nigeria.⁹¹ Again, Chukwuma argued that between 2009 and 2010 there was hardly a day passed without cases of kidnapping being reported in the South-east area.⁹²

Table I: “Kidnapping Incidents” in Six Geopolitical Zones in Nigeria between 2008 and 2010

Zone	States	Incidence by Year			Total
		2008	2009	2010	
NORTH-CENTRAL	<i>Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Niger, Plateau, and Abuja</i>	3	43	41	87
NORTHEAST	<i>Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe</i>	1	101	19	121
NORTHWEST	<i>Jigawa, Katsina, Kano, Kaduna, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara</i>	2	13	17	32
SOUTHEAST	<i>Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo</i>	40	307	122	469
SOUTH-SOUTH	<i>Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers</i>	128	362	137	627
SOUTHWEST	<i>Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Onyo and Oyo</i>	16	113	42	171
<i>Total for all six zones</i>		<i>190</i>	<i>939</i>	<i>378</i>	<i>1,507</i>

Source: Adapted from Statistics on Kidnapping, Force Headquarters, Nigeria Police Force, Abuja.⁹³

There was also the belief in some quarters that the crime was being championed and “exported” by “South-easterners” (the Igbo) to other parts of the country. This is, however, evidently not the case. The identities of many members of ransom kidnapping syndicates that were arrested and exposed by the police around the country show that such claims of Igbo dominance of the “trade” across the country were rather fictional, and at

best, a figment of some people's imagination. Indeed, each dominant ethnic group in each state across the country must have likely dominated the business in that state, as they would have a better idea and knowledge of the terrain, workings and cultures of the area. However, each of such group may have acted sometimes in conjunction with other criminals from diverse backgrounds.

The table on the facing page shows the summary of "kidnapping incidents" in six Geo-political zones in Nigeria between 2008 and 2010, as compiled by the Nigerian Police. A point to note is that this is certainly not an exhaustive list. Without a doubt, so many incidences were not publicized or brought to the knowledge of the police. Be that as it may, some critical deductions could be made from the table. Firstly, it is obvious that these incidences were equally for ransom purposes. Second, the table confirms ransom kidnaping as a widespread crime in Nigeria, although the phenomenon is more endemic in some sections than the others. Thirdly, it further shows that during the period, while the South-east was generally believed to have been most affected by the incidence, the Niger Delta region actually recorded the highest occurrence of the crime. Finally, it shows a persistent progression in the incidence. Indeed, this was a reflection of how prevalent, common and rife the crime was becoming in the society.

With this South-east variant, – strictly greed-driven ransoming acts, that is, motivated by and undertaken squarely for financial gains or profits – ransoming became commonplace but it was rarely reported by the Western news media, ostensibly for two reasons: firstly, it became largely a "local" or domestic economic practice in Nigerian communities, and secondly, it concerned or affected foreigners less. One is of the opinion and would argue that it was the very rampant and callous nature of this variant in the country that eventually transformed ransoming into a "popular criminal social culture" of sort – one in which many deprived, frustrated and idle youths, as well as some privileged elite, as evidence suggest, took solace and made a source of livelihood.

Other Motives for Ransoming

Ransoming sometimes may be a politically motivated criminal tactic. With Nigeria's return to civil rule in 1999, a new form of ransoming equally emerged. This is what I refer to as "political ransoming," which comes in diverse arrangements. Firstly, it involved the kidnapping and ransoming of a politician by his/her political rival(s) for the political office he/she was occupying or vying for. As Adegbulu explains, the idea was to

intimidate and force such kidnapped rivals to resign their positions, or step down and not run for the office. Of course it is someone who is “free” and “available” that can contest or run for an office.⁹⁴ Rejecting such pressures could be fatal, as outright assassination could be the next option. Indeed, assassination of politicians is not new and has been all too frequent. A good case in point is that of Chief Funsho Williams, who was assassinated because of his unwavering ambition to run for the Lagos state gubernatorial seat. Indeed, his assassination, as well as those of Chiefs Marshal Harry and Bola Ige, to mention but a few, continued to serve as a warning to many politicians who were lucky to be so “ransomed.”

Secondly, “godfatherism” was another form of political ransoming. Godfatherism – a common feature of Nigerian politics – is neo-patrimonial clientelism of symbiotic relationship between a “godfather” (powerful political patron) and “godson” (upstart political office aspirant or holder). Godfathers manipulated entire democratic process – from rigging votes and influencing results during electoral exercises and securing political offices for their “Godsons” to actually running the government in order to service their private socio-economic interests.⁹⁵ It was necessarily an economic investment that must yield profits at all cost. This phenomenon created a gun-point, “do-or-die” and naked violence democracy. Two prominent godfatherism cases in point in Nigeria’s fourth republic were those of Dr. Chris Ngige of Anambra state and Alhaji Rashidi Ladoja of Oyo state respectively.

On 10 July 2003, Ngige, then serving governor of Anambra state, was abducted, taken hostage and then forced to resign his political office because he refused to make adequate monthly financial returns to his Godfather, Mr. Chris Uba, as hitherto agreed. Ngige argued that he reneged because making such payments would jeopardize development in the state. Ngige was, however, reinstated as his resignation was deemed illegal and unconstitutional since it was done under duress.⁹⁶ A similar incident took place in the case of Ladoja who was ousted on 12 January 2006 through the political intrigues of his Godfather, Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu, for similar reasons as in Ngige’s case. Ladoja’s removal from office was eventually voided by Nigeria’s Supreme Court as it was unconstitutional.⁹⁷

In other words, with this phenomenon taking root in the country since the 1999, it was the wealthy elite of power that oppressed and ransomed the masses through acts of electoral manipulation, political violence, personal gratification and fraud. In a sense, this was the exact opposite of

the economic variant, where it was the poor that waged a war against “the wealthy and powerful” in society, utilizing the instrumentality of ransom kidnapping.

Ransoming: Society-specific Reasons for Prevalence

As we have noted earlier, the primary factor underlining the emergence and spread of this social ill in the Nigerian society was the unacceptable and deplorable conditions of the youth which exploded into acts of criminality, one of which was ransoming. However, beyond these stated conditions, some other factors notably explain the prevalence of this crime in the society. The first is what may be referred to as transitions in the political economy of criminality in the country. From the early 1970s, after the civil war, armed robbery emerged as a notable organized crime in Nigeria, thriving through the 1980s and 1990s. But the tide began to change and several of the criminals shifted to other means of criminal gains. The country began to witness a rise in a new wave of crime known as “advance fee fraud,” or “419” in Nigerian parlance. This kind of crime emerged in the early 1990s and thrived throughout that decade and beyond. Instructively, there were elements of both armed robbery and ransoming within the framework of the “419” crime,⁹⁸ such that the former was gradually phasing out while the later was almost a novelty. Therefore, one can construe the eventual emergence and prevalence of ransoming as a sort of paradigm shift in the political economy of criminality in Nigeria, such that new forms of organized crimes and criminal opportunities emerged from time to time in the country.

In the second instance, it is pertinent to look closely at the evolution of ransoming from the perspective of crime and punishment. This emphasizes the natural shift, among criminals, to “safer crimes,” that is, those crimes with seemingly lesser risks for the criminals. For instance, in relation to our first point here, one of the measures put in place by government to tackle the rising incidents of armed robbery in the country was the establishment of the Armed Robbery and Firearms Tribunals. This resulted in the prosecution and public execution of thousands of poor, deprived and frustrated youth who perpetrated this crime. In contrast, and unlike armed robbery, the “419” crime did not involve the use of arms nor did it attract capital punishment. It involved far lesser penalty of imprisonment for a few years. This made it far more preferable to armed robbery.

When one looks at the punishment for the crime of kidnapping and hostage-taking – not ransoming, as it is not considered a crime in itself – until recently they carried far more lenient punishments, the maximum of which is between five to ten years jail term, even when such act was perpetrated with arms. But more than that, when the culprits were “connected,” or actually colluded with politicians or state security forces, they often got away with such crimes. Hence, perpetrators understood that ransoming did not attract the capital punishment, had minimal risks and paid well.⁹⁹ This is especially so as there was almost a certainty that families and friends of the victims will pay the ransom without involving the police. These shifts in criminality were necessarily engendered by the need for self-preservation.

Militarization and the proliferation of arms constituted the third factor, especially in the context of the Niger Delta case with its culture of impunity. This primarily came about due to the State’s incessant engagements with delta peoples’ agitations through acts of military brutalizations in the last twenty years, which eventually militarized and engrained militancy in the youths of the region.¹⁰⁰ The next was the proliferation of sophisticated (small arms and light) weapons in the Niger Delta region by its political elite. Of course, the escalation of crises in the region led to such proliferation – a fact acknowledged by a serving Minister of State for Defense, Dr. Rowland Oritsejafor.¹⁰¹

A fourth factor has to do with changes in societal worldview and values due to growing materialism, especially among the youth. A good number of the young held nothing sacred any more, not even the time-honored tradition of respect.¹⁰² The Nigerian youth was in his/her own world, seemingly uncontrollable and an agent in his/her own right, taking and enforcing critical decisions. There is also the desire for “quick money” or what many have called the “get rich quick” syndrome, which made the desire for a decent occupation, hardwork, discipline and legitimate earnings become rather the exception, especially amongst the youth.¹⁰³ Religious organizations which used to be bastion of and bases for morality and discipline equally lost it to materialism; even the so-called Ministers of God themselves flaunted excessive wealth in the face of unacceptable societal poverty and destitution.¹⁰⁴

Finally, the pervasive wave and prevalence of ransoming was a symptom of a larger malaise – a failing state – a designate for a state “which has shattered social and political structures,” and whose governments have weakened to such an extent that they are unable to provide

basic public goods.¹⁰⁵ Thus, it represents a state in transition, one that was becoming a “failed state.” Most accounts of such states center on “erosion of state capacity” especially in ensuring peace and stability (adequate security of life and property), effective governance, territorial control, and economic sustainability.¹⁰⁶ Without a doubt, this was what Nigeria truly epitomized. Briggs noted that under such conditions as one finds in Nigeria, “the state’s ability to put forward risks to deter kidnappers is severely hampered.” Indeed, it was such lawless conditions and institutional weaknesses that allowed ransom kidnapping to grow and thrive in the country.¹⁰⁷ Consequent upon these facts, Nigeria was ranked 54th position in the 2005 Failed States Index,¹⁰⁸ as well as in 17th and 18th positions in 2007¹⁰⁹ and 2008¹¹⁰ respectively. This was a statement on the progressive decline of its socio-political and economic situation and descent into a failed state.

Implications for the Nigerian State

The issues and trends of ransoming are an insalubrious phenomenon of the Nigerian society. They have significant dire implications for the country’s overall development trajectory. The main fallouts are the concern about insecurity among the general populace and the stalling of democratic development in virtually all parts of the country. These, of course, have many facets, ranging from the local to the global. It is in this light that I would articulate the consequences to the Nigerian society. Ransoming created a palpable fear amongst the people of the country, especially in the areas where the crime was endemic. This was especially so as just anyone could become a victim – if not as the abducted, then as a payer of or contributor to the ransom. In other words, the crime drastically undermined the public’s sense of security and put citizens in a state of fear, and the country in a state of terror.¹¹¹ Indeed, it created a “culture of fear” in society, with the result that it was difficult for people to express their potentials to the fullest because of uncertainties of that moment.¹¹² As Añurunwa appropriately noted:

We all lived in real fear. It could be anyone’s turn the next day and the outcome of the whole saga could eventually be fatal. People went to bed early. Children were not free anymore to walk around the streets and even the elderly ones were subjected to a life of ‘hide and seek’, literally sneaking in and out of their homes. ...It was quite bad.¹¹³

The situation warranted a good number of the wealthy who lived in the rather endemic regions to seek safer abodes, relocating their families elsewhere within or outside the country. Similarly, many victims also relocated due to the same security reason.¹¹⁴ One such endemic place was Aba, the once bustling commercial “*Enyimba City*” that attracted merchants from across West Africa. Aba became a ghost of itself as its new image repulsed both visitors and its rich residents who relocated to safer places.¹¹⁵

Ransoming dramatically changed the social lives of the people. Most elite kept off from social outings, ceremonies, public gatherings and relaxation centers because they saw themselves as potential victims.¹¹⁶ Such “forced ostracism” impacted negatively on society. For instance, the famed spirit of and drive for “self-help” rural community development among the Igbo was weakened if not destroyed as the wealthy and well-meaning members of society began to keep away from public gatherings or making public donations towards “self-help” projects. Indeed, such donations could be the basis for singling them or their relatives out for ransoming. As this is a region where most public projects – school, hospitals, water and electricity schemes, community halls, churches, etc – are all financed by the popular self-help culture, what then becomes of the area if the financially endowed stops donating to community projects, especially in the face of a very weak formal structure of governance?¹¹⁷ The ransoming phenomenon, thus, led to what I term “arrested development” in many rural communities. Many people who started any projects in rural communities, whether for personal or industrial purposes, abandoned such projects as they were often strong basis for ransoming.

The prevalence of this crime also impacted negatively on the efforts of many Nigerian entrepreneurs to give the economy a boost. As Fyanka argued:

Nigeria’s economy was growing fast, especially before the upsurge of this criminal trend, largely because of the tenacity of Nigerians to build the economy. Many entrepreneurs in the country took initiative and the lead in bolstering the economy...But the emergence of this trend worked seriously against these efforts; the cohesion that we saw in the Nigerian economy to move forward was seriously hampered. ...Ransoming was rather an attack on the root and foundation of the economic growth of the country.¹¹⁸

The attack was primarily against members of the business class. As these people were at the forefront of the economic growth in the country, and

their resource base happened to be the targets of this particular criminal phenomenon, it goes without saying that it was also an attack on the economic growth of the country. The impact was thus remarkable.¹¹⁹

Ransoming led to disruptions in the oil industry which caused a significant reduction in Nigeria's oil production. This negatively affected the country's foreign exchange and developmental objectives, especially in the face of global financial and economic meltdown.¹²⁰ With such genuine threats to the lives of their staff, some petrobusinesses were forced to declare a *force majeure*. Such trends hurt the industry and constituted a major setback for the economy. For example, it was estimated that in 2009 alone ransom kidnapping acts drastically cut oil production in the country by about 25% and a revenue loss of over \$44 billion.¹²¹ In other words, if this was the estimated loss to the oil sector for one year during the "lull period" of the incidents, one can reasonably project that the overall loss (between 1999 and 2012) could be anything between \$740 billion to \$1 trillion.

In addition, "ransom cost" was introduced into the cost of production by many companies, especially those working with expatriates. This raised the cost of production as companies hired more security personnel.¹²² They also earmarked huge "kidnap funds" for their staff.¹²³ Amusan explains the context and dynamic of this development in petrobusinesses:

[W]ith the inclusion of ransom cost in the cost of production in their joint ventures with the federal government through the NNPC, with the help of their parent states' diplomatic missions and the traditional chiefs in the oil bearing region, negotiation would be organized without direct involvement of the Nigerian government where huge sum ... would be paid to the militants in exchange for the release of expatriates. Eventually, it is the government that would pay for this cost.¹²⁴

As a result of this security threat, many foreign multinational companies in different sectors abandoned developmental projects, closed offices and/or relocated to other parts of the country, or abroad. For instance, Julius Berger, a German construction giant in Nigeria, abandoned many of its road construction and civil engineering work in the region. Similarly, such high level of insecurity led to the closure of such notable companies as Lever Brothers, Nigerian Breweries, Aba Textile Mills and Dana Motors (all in Aba, Abia state).¹²⁵

Criminal acts like ransom kidnapping also portrayed Nigeria as an investment-unfriendly destination.¹²⁶ For instance, in 2009 the Russian Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Alexander D. Polyakov, reiterated the need

for the Nigerian government to tackle kidnapping problems and other security challenges to enable business activities to thrive.¹²⁷ Indeed, with the spread of this crime to other parts of the country, reluctance to invest in troubled regions became a country-wide problem. In this light, Mrs. Helen Clark, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, characterized Nigeria as “particularly dangerous from a personal security point of view.”¹²⁸ Thus, like many other foreign leaders, she asked her country’s nationals resident or working in Nigeria to leave as their security was no longer guaranteed. Nigeria was, therefore, seen as a country in which insecurity loomed large and where the ransoming criminality had assumed significant notoriety.¹²⁹

Since Nigeria relies heavily on foreign direct investments (FDIs) to boost its domestic economy, a socio-political crisis like ransoming was a real bad news. Meaningful economic investments that could affect the lives of the people and the fortunes of the country were lost as foreign investors “don’t invest in risky climate, particularly in the context of global economic recession.”¹³⁰ The insecurity also created a vicious cycle in the society, which led to massive unemployment arising from the lack or withdrawal of investment. Without a doubt, the adverse effects of these to the development of the domestic economy, as well as to the developmental strides in and of the country cannot be over emphasized.

Lastly, when such crimes as ransoming continued unabated, it “sustained” an international image crisis for Nigeria. Indeed, one cannot put a cost on the image of the country. From the late 1970s Nigeria began to slide into ignobility due to the activities of its citizens both at home and abroad, especially due to a steady increase in corruption and organized crimes. These began to tarnish its image on the international scene. Therefore, the upsurge in the rate of ransoming in the country further hurt the country’s already flawed image, especially as it (the country) assumed the status of “the kidnapping center of the world.”¹³¹

Conclusion

Ransoming became endemic due to a critical nexus of social, political and economic factors in Nigeria. A section of the youth initially took to this crime as a tool of coercion or as a form of militant diplomacy in their ideological struggles in the Niger Delta region where violent militancy and criminality largely became notable instruments. Their targets were originally expatriate oil workers. The phenomenon then quickly got transformed, shifting in context, location and content. In other words, it became commercialized and a booming “cottage industry” – a major

source of livelihood for so many deprived, abused and frustrated youths across the country. This was the outcome of the lack of economic development and opportunity for a majority of Nigerians which led many to crime as a means of supporting themselves and their families. In this context, the typical victim profile also changed, shifting to include wealthy political and business elite, and eventually just anyone in the society. It did not just become a multi-million-naira business venture, but also a popular criminal “social culture” in different parts of the country.

Our discourse underlines an important dynamic of the ransoming debate: the notion of “competing victimhoods.” On the one hand, the poor, oppressed, abused and frustrated youth in society claimed ransoming was a means of survival and “payback” for a ruthless and oppressive system in which the power elite governed mainly in their own interest and at the expense of the overall interest of the majority of the people. On the other hand, the elite and society itself claimed they were targeted victims of wicked, heinous and gruesome acts by common criminals and dangerous youths. In such competing narratives a salient point is clear: ransoming was actually a product of the mismanagement of the enormous human and natural resources subsisting in the Nigerian society. This was squarely a very sad misadventure of governance. Moreover, it became a “big, productive and lucrative business” due to inept governance, a predatory elite, and weak institutional frameworks. Indeed, bad governance increased the rate of crimes. This has had debilitating developmental implications for Nigeria.

NOTES

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⁶³ Nwajiuba, “The Socioeconomics of the Kidnapping Industry,” 8.

⁶⁴ Briggs, *The Kidnapping Business*, 19.

⁶⁵ “*Otokoto*” has become the name given to the clandestine act of ritual murder in this part of Nigeria. For some in-depth discussion on the dynamics of the *Otokoto* incident in Owerri, from where the name was adopted, see: Akachi Odoemene, “Fighting Corruption without the State: Civil Society Agency and the ‘Otokoto Saga’,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 25:3 (2012).

⁶⁶ “Yahoo-yahoo” was the name given to a kind of “Advance Fee Fraud” in which some criminal-minded young Nigerian youth (*Yahoo Boys*) duped foreigners of huge sums of money using the Internet as a medium. These *Yahoo Boys* send tens of thousands of deceptive, but convincing and attractive e-mails, particularly through the Yahoo domain, to foreigners in which they offered bogus deals. A good number of these foreigners fall for and are duped due to their greed.

⁶⁷ “419” is the number of the criminal code that deals with “Advance Fee Fraud” (Nigerian Criminal Code 419). However, it is a popularly notorious and common parlance in the country used to qualify most of those who take to such clandestine activities, or those whose sources of wealth are questionable.

⁶⁸ Nwajiuba, “The Socioeconomics of the Kidnapping Industry,” 8.

⁶⁹ ‘Jide Osuntokun, Personal Communication.

⁷⁰ Nwajiuba, “The Socioeconomics of the Kidnapping Industry,” 8.

⁷¹ This is the whole idea behind the determination of “kidnap value” or “ransom value” of people. Thus, anyone whose kidnap value was high due to the wealth of his relatives, friends and associates was in the danger of being kidnapped for ransom.

⁷² Abati, “Ransom Kidnapping.”

⁷³ Robert Chiedo Ezebuio, adult, businessman; kidnap and ransoming victim, Owerri, Imo state, Nigeria. Personal communication; interviewed on Sunday, 29 July 2012; Adibe, “Pervasive Kidnapping in Nigeria”; Ernest Ibhaze, “General Security Awareness for Organization: a Case Study of Kidnapping and Terrorism” (paper presented at a one-day Zonal Police Security Awareness Seminar, Shehu Musa Yar’Adua Centre Abuja, 2 June 2011).

⁷⁴ Shola Omotola; Femi Adegbulu, adult, Diplomatic Historian and Security Expert, Lagos, Nigeria. Personal communication; interviewed on 18 September 2012; Philip Akobundu, 34

years, Social critic, commentator and writer, Port-Harcourt city, Rivers state, Nigeria. Personal Communication; interviewed on 26 July 2012.

⁷⁵ Defence Headquarters, *First Quarter Report on Security in the Niger Delta* (Abuja: DHQ, 2009); Ukoha Ukiwo, Ada Henri-Ukoha and Magdalene O. Emole, "Governance and Security in Abia State," in Ukoha Ukiwo and Innocent Chukwuma (eds.) *Governance and Insecurity in Southeastern Nigeria* (Lagos, Abuja, Owerri: CLEEN Foundation, 2012), 50-51.

⁷⁶ Ukiwo, Henri-Ukoha and Emole, "Governance and Security in Abia State," 50-51.

⁷⁷ Robert Ezebuio; Philip Akobundu; Kenneth Nwoko; Olumide Ekanade, 40 years, Economic Historian and lecturer, Redeemer's University of Nigeria (RUN), Mowe, Ogun state, Nigeria. Personal communication; interviewed on 19 September 2012; Chukwudi Nduka, 48 years, Pastor and businessman, Aba, Abia State, Nigeria. Personal communication; interviewed on 22 July 2012.

⁷⁸ AOA and NWGAV, "The Violent Road"; Femi Adegbulu; Chukwudi Nduka; Philip Akobundu; Kenneth Nwoko; Olumide Ekanade, Personal Communications.

⁷⁹ Alexander and Klein, "Kidnapping and Hostage-taking"; Femi Adegbulu; Robert Ezebuio; Philip Akobundu, Personal Communications.

⁸⁰ AOA and NWGAV, "The Violent Road"; B.O. Okaba and Ngboawaji Daniel Nte, "Youth, Conflict and Urban Africa: A Review of some Niger Delta Cities," *Commonwealth Youth Development* 6:2 (2008), 41-54.

⁸¹ Nwajiuba, "The Socioeconomics of the Kidnapping Industry," 8.

⁸² Chukwudi Nduka, Personal Communication.

⁸³ Chukwudi Nduka, Personal Communication.

⁸⁴ Philip Akobundu, Personal Communication.

⁸⁵ Control Risks Group, "Energy Industry," *Kidnapping and Ransoming*, 1.

⁸⁶ Nwajiuba, "The Socioeconomics of the Kidnapping Industry"; D. Onojowo, "Of Hoodlums, North and South", *Punch Newspaper*, 21 October 2001.

⁸⁷ Kunle Falayi, "Terrified Lagosians Groan as Kidnappers Prowl Metropolis," *Saturday Punch Newspaper*, 27 April 2013, 2; 37; Robinson Osarumwense Owenbiugie and H.A. Olumese, "Kidnapping: A Threat to Entrepreneurship in Nigeria", *Journal of Education, Health and Technology Research (JEHERT)* 1:1 (2011), 67-73; Abati, "Ransom Kidnapping."

⁸⁸ *Kidnapping and Ransoming Magazine*, "Boko Haram Members Kidnap Wives, Children of Soldiers in Borno," *Kidnap and Ransom Magazine*, 22 December 2013, <http://www.krmagazine.com/tag/boko-haram/> (accessed: 25 December 2013); Ola' Audu, "How Boko Haram Turned to Kidnapping to Raise Funds in Borno," *Premium Times*, 20 May 2013, <http://premiumtimesng.com/news/135082-how-boko-haram-turned-to-kidnapping-to-raise-funds-in-borno.html> (accessed: 5 October 2013); Michael Olugbode, "JTF: Boko Haram Resorts to Kidnapping to Raise Funds," *ThisDay Newspaper*, 29 April 2013, <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/jtf-boko-haram-resorts-to-kidnapping-to-raise-funds/146240/> (accessed: 19 November 2013); Reuters News Agency, "Nigeria's Boko Haram 'got \$3m Ransom' to Free Hostages," *BBC News*, 27 April 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-22320077> (accessed: 6 December 2013).

⁸⁹ Jennifer Lofkrantz, "Ransoming Captives in the Sokoto Caliphate," in Behnaz Mirzai, Ismael Montana and Paul E. Lovejoy (eds.), *Islam, Slave and Diaspora* (Trenton, NJ: Africa

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⁹⁰ Abati, "Ransom Kidnapping."

⁹¹ CLEEN Foundation, *National Crime and Victimization Survey (NCVS)* (Lagos: CLEEN Foundation, 2010).

⁹² Innocent Chukwuma, "Preface", in Ukoha Ukiwo and Innocent Chukwuma (eds.) *Governance and Insecurity in Southeastern Nigeria* (Lagos, Abuja, Owerri: CLEEN Foundation, 2012), viii.

⁹³ Ibhaze, "General Security Awareness for Organization," 8-9.

⁹⁴ Femi Adegbulu, Personal Communication.

⁹⁵ For some discussion on Godfatherism, see: Isaac Olawale Albert, "Explaining 'Godfatherism' in Nigerian Politics," *African Sociological Review* 9:2 (2005), 79-105; L.U. Edigin, "Political Conflicts and Godfatherism in Nigeria: A Focus on the Fourth Republic," *African Research Review* 4:4 (October 2010), 174-186; Chimaroke Nnamani, "The Godfather Phenomenon in Democratic Nigeria: Silicon or Real?," *The Source Magazine* (2 June 2003), 5-6; Jibrin Ibrahim, "The Rise of Nigeria's Godfathers," *BBC News Online*, 10 November 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3156540.stm> (accessed: 9 March 2010).

⁹⁶ Albert, "Explaining 'Godfatherism'."

⁹⁷ Edigin, "Political Conflicts and Godfatherism in Nigeria."

⁹⁸ Odoemene, "Fighting Corruption without the State."

⁹⁹ H. Eso, "Incessant Kidnappings and the *Beirutization* of Nigeria," (2009), www.kwenu.com (accessed: 13 February 2013).

¹⁰⁰ John Iyene Owubokiri, "Kidnapping – A Crime against Humanity: What is the Way Out?" (Fourth Dr. Martin Luther King (Jr) Memorial Lecture, Nigeria Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), Lagos, 27 May 2009, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2009/06/kidnapping-a-crime-against-humanitywhat-is-the-way-out/> (accessed: 8 February 2011).

¹⁰¹ Owubokiri, "Kidnapping – A Crime against Humanity: What is the Way Out?."

¹⁰² Nwajiuba, "The Socioeconomics of the Kidnapping Industry," 8.

¹⁰³ Dr. Anthony Ali, adult, Economic historian and researcher, Benson Idahosa University, Benin city, Edo state, Nigeria. Personal communication; interviewed on 1 July 2012; 'Jide Osuntokun; Chukwudi Nduka; Olumide Ekanade, Personal Communications.

¹⁰⁴ Anthony Ali, Personal Communication.

¹⁰⁵ Anonymous, "Failed State" *Source Watch*, http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Failed_state (accessed: 3 December 2013).

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¹⁰⁷ Briggs, *The Kidnapping Business*, 2.

¹⁰⁸ Anonymous, "The Failed States Index 2005", <http://ffp.statesindex.org/rankings-2005-sortable> (accessed: 3 August 2013).

¹⁰⁹ Pax Christi Netherlands, *Kidnapping is Booming Business* (July) (Utrecht: IKV Pax Christi, 2008), 12.

¹¹⁰ “2011 Failed State Index-Interactive Maps and Ranking”: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/06/17/2011_failed_states_index_interactive_map_and_rankings#sthash.YVOL5ui3.dpbs (accessed: 20 December 2013).

¹¹¹ Pax Christi Netherlands, *Kidnapping is Booming*; Anthony Ali, Personal Communication.

¹¹² J. Shola Omotola, Personal Communication.

¹¹³ Chukwudi Añurunwa, 40 years, Architect and ransoming victim, Aba, Abia state, Nigeria. Personal communication; interviewed on 22 July 2012.

¹¹⁴ Nwajiuba, “The Socioeconomics of the Kidnapping Industry”, 8; Ukiwo, Henri-Ukoha and Emole, “Governance and Security in Abia State,” 50.

¹¹⁵ Ukoha Ukiwo, Ada Henri-Ukoha and Magdalene O. Emole, “Governance and Security in Abia State,” in Ukoha Ukiwo and Innocent Chukwuma (eds.), *Governance and Insecurity in Southeastern Nigeria* (Lagos, Abuja, Owerri: CLEEN Foundation, 2012), 24.

¹¹⁶ Ikpong, “Kidnapping: Exacerbating the Corridors,” 5.

¹¹⁷ Nwajiuba, “The Socioeconomics of the Kidnapping Industry,” 8.

¹¹⁸ Bernard Fyanka, Personal Communication.

¹¹⁹ Bernard Fyanka, Personal Communication.

¹²⁰ Ikpong, “Kidnapping: Exacerbating the Corridors,” 6.

¹²¹ Nte, “Kidnapping, Hostage Taking,” 64.

¹²² Cyril Obi, Personal Communication.

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¹²⁴ Lere Amusan, “The Political Economy of Fossil Fuels in Nigeria”, in Victor Ojaborotu (ed.) *Contending Issues in the Niger Delta Crisis of Nigeria* (Delray Beach, FL: JAPSS Press, Inc., 2009), 20-53.

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¹²⁸ *The News Magazine*, 11 August 2008, 22.

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