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Arrest the Kidnap Menace

Policy Recommendations

1. Unemployment especially among youths in Nigeria, which is about 33.10% should be tackled seriously.
2. Policing to be strengthened with intelligence gathering and creation of national crime data base.
3. Creation of strong community-police relationship and security sensitisation programme to promotion crime reporting.
4. Deployment of advance technologies in fighting crimes, monitoring and tracking suspicious source of wealth.
5. Old fashioned policing practice such as paying ransom with marked bills should be encouraged.

Nextier SPD Policy Weekly provides an analysis of topical conflict, security, and development issues and proposes recommendations to address them. It is a publication of Nextier SPD. For further discussion of pragmatic implementation of the recommendations, please contact

The great expectation in Nigeria that amnesty programmes for terrorists would put an end to kidnapping for ransoms has not been realised. Hardly a week goes by, without some distressing media reports of kidnap cases across Nigeria. This menace takes a toll on the victims and their families. Many of the victims are tortured, while some are killed; and most of the victims pay the ransom. For example, on October 1, 2018, over ten commuters were kidnapped along the Brinin Gwari-Kaduna highway. Barely a week after this incident, two Chinese expatriates were abducted at a construction site at Wasa village in Abuja, Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory. This pervasive abduction of both citizens and foreigners, is not only a personal tragedy of the victims and their families, but also a national disaster. As news of everyday kidnapping is transmitted around the world, it raises Nigeria's political risk profile. Although Koko (2016), argues that increase in political risk has a significant influence on foreign direct investment in Nigeria, it does not yet inhibit FDI flow because of location factors such as market size, abundance of natural resources, and economic growth potentials. Notwithstanding, the paper cautions the need to address the growing kidnap menace that increases the political risk perception in the country. This edition of Nextier SPD Weekly examines and provides recommendations for mitigating kidnap violence.

Kidnapping has been used in many conflict situations either as a tool for terrorism, political leverage, or as a means of funding insurgencies. A 2014 New York Times article accused Europe of bankrolling Al Queda through ransom payments. Kidnapping has become a major phenomenon in Nigeria's

challenges with violent conflicts.

The history of modern day kidnapping for ransom can be traced to the Niger Delta region where, although it was initially informed by grievance, it soon became characterised by greed. It was used for political leverage to extract commitments from the government and oil companies. In some cases, it was simply an act of sheer criminality masked as political activism. However, the 2009 implementation of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) for ex-agitators in the Niger Delta led to a significant and marked decrease in kidnap incidents in the region. Part of the reason for the decline was the fact that many of the leaders of the ex-agitators were making a significant amount of money from the monthly payment from the Federal Government of Nigeria and required that there be a semblance of peace in the region to guarantee the continued payment of the largess. It is alleged that many of these leaders collect as much as N40,000 from the N65,000 paid monthly to over 35,000 ex-agitators in the PAP.

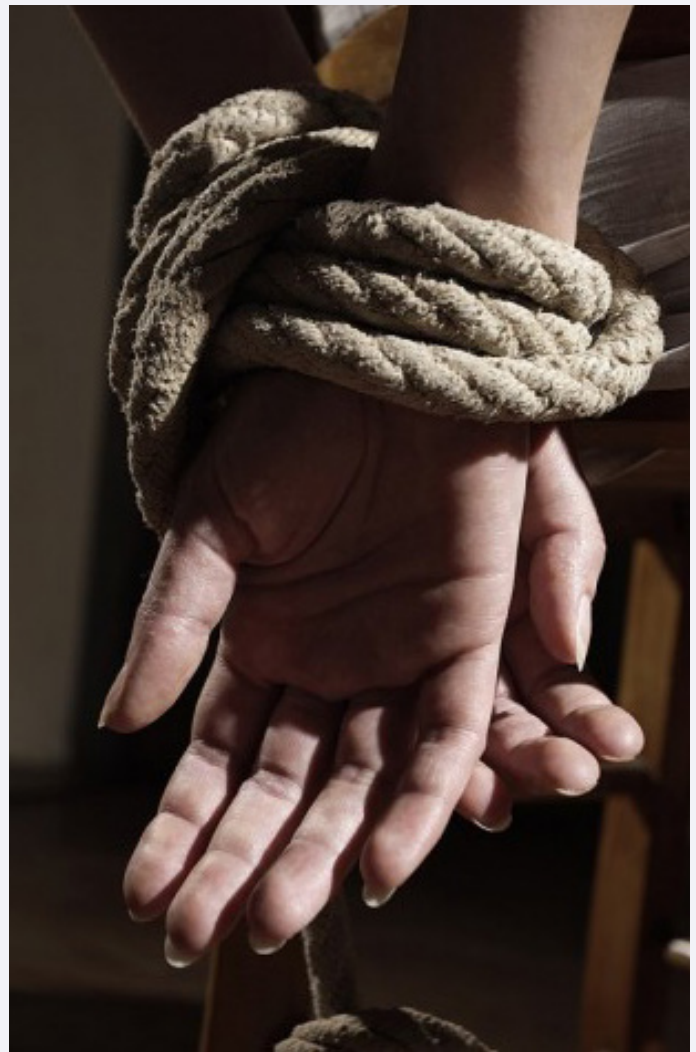
Although the government's "bribe for peace" (or amnesty programme) seemed to work in the Niger Delta, it unleashed significant unintended consequences across Nigeria. The payment of ransoms for kidnap victims essentially created a market for such criminality. A 2016 Washington Post essay explains how kidnapping for ransom works like a market. Like a genie unlocked from a bottle, kidnapping has resurfaced and assumed a terrible dimension in various regions across Nigeria. For instance, the mass abductions in the Northeast region by Boko Haram, a terrorist organisation. The abduction of hundreds of Chibok and

[Dapchi](#) schoolgirls have assumed international disrepute. The criminal industry has produced multi-millionaire kingpins such as Chukwudumeme Onwuamadike, better known as [Evans](#). The stretch of road between Kaduna and Abuja is seen as a hive for kidnapers.

With the challenges brought about by ransom payments and the Presidential Amnesty Programme, Nigeria appears to be confused on how to [solve](#) the kidnapping problem. The country has experimented with both repressive and reconciliatory methods. For example, the use of violence in the Niger Delta did not ensure the release of the kidnapped; rather, it was counter-productive as some of the victims died during the rescue operations. The haemorrhaging effects of the crime on oil production led to the use of negotiation and payment of ransoms to secure the release of kidnapped persons. Besides, a harsher penalty regime has evolved in a number of states for those convicted of kidnapping. In Edo and a few other states, the crime now attracts [life imprisonment](#) and the confiscation of the estate acquired with such proceeds. A few states such as Delta, have even [executed convicted kidnapers](#). However, these anti-kidnap policies have been largely ineffective as evidenced by the rising waves of the crime.

Nigeria needs to reduce the incidents of kidnaps and abductions. Nextier SPD proffers the following recommendations to check the spate of kidnappings across the country:

1. According to [Osumah and Aghedo \(2011\)](#), a large number of the perpetrators of the kidnap violence are jobless, poor and frustrated youth. Indeed, youth bulge has been known to correlate with violence in weak states. With Nigeria's youth unemployment at [33.10 percent](#), government and the private sector must work together to get the economy growing again to reduce the probability of youth participation in violent crimes reduces.
2. The Nigeria Police Force need to be strengthened with the knowledge and tools for intelligence gathering and operations. For instance, there is need for a networked national crime database that collates information on crimes, anti-social behaviour, and civil disorder. The "Broken Window" theory suggests that policing that targets minor crimes helps to create a culture of lawfulness and order that prevents more serious crimes.
3. Criminals live within communities. The communities know the characters of their constituents. There is need for a security sensitisation programme, that helps the law enforcement authorities to build relationships,



where it becomes possible for members of the community, to report any nefarious activities. This should be a cross-government initiative ,with participation from the National Orientation Agency, civil society organisations, media organisations, etc.

4. Advances in technology have improved the capabilities of the security agencies to track, or dissuade such crimes. There are various ways that today's human beings, inadvertently leave their digital fingerprints. The Police have become very effective, with tracking criminals through their mobile phones. The Force should improve its ability to monitor and track other sources, such as bank transaction, lifestyle choices, etc.
5. Good, old-fashioned policing has successfully used marked bills to track, identify, and capture criminals. Nigeria has deployed this practice in the past; however, it requires a closer working relationship between the Police and the community, such that victims of such crimes would have the confidence to work with the police.

In conclusion, taking proactive steps towards reducing this scourge of kidnappings, remains the most practical solution to the growing menace.