

# THE POLITICS AND PROSPECTS OF *AMOTEKUN* REGIONAL SECURITY NETWORK IN YORUBA SOUTH-WEST, NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*Nigeria has grappled with several security challenges emanating from communal and religious conflicts, urban violence, arms smuggling, kidnapping, human trafficking, cybercrime, and armed robbery from independence. Recent Niger Delta militancy, Boko-Haram insurgency in the North-East, Fulani herdsmen, bandits attacks, kidnapping, and ritual killings have continued to wreak havoc on the country's security landscape. Efforts to curb security challenges have seen the deployment of both conventional and unconventional measures, including the police, military and other paramilitary organisations, militias and vigilante groups. However, all these interventions are yet to produce the necessary outcomes. Thus, as a way of curbing the persistent insecurities in their states, the governors of the South-West Yoruba speaking states inaugurated the Western Nigeria Security Network Code Amotekun. Using the historical and analytical approach, the article contends that the formation of the security network despite fierce opposition by some ethnic nationalities and federal government functionaries cannot be unconnected with the successful mobilisation of the Yoruba ethnic solidarity and renaissance of common attributes. This includes the myth of common ancestry, invincibility of traditional armies and tactics as displayed in Jalumi wars and Agbekoya uprising, survival instincts, and the elite consensus among others. The article concludes that proper synergy among the Amotekun security network and state machineries would bring about the needed success with minimal suspicion.*

**Keywords:** Western Nigeria Security Network, Amotekun, Insecurity, Indigenous, Yoruba, and Nigeria.

## **Introduction**

One of the primary responsibilities of government is safeguarding the lives and properties of its people. This is so, as the state possesses military capacity and threat of force, which other sections of the society are often incapable of.<sup>1</sup> The Nigerian state is getting more insecure by the day. More people are engaging in crimes and are getting more ruthless, desperate, and sophisticated. This has led to a threat to lives and properties, hindered business activities, discouraged local and foreign investors,

<sup>1</sup> Ibrahim, B., and Ibrahim, M. (2017) 'An Analysis of the Causes and Consequences of Kidnapping in Nigeria' *African Research Review*, 11, 134.

thus, affecting and retarding the socio-economic development of the country.<sup>2</sup> Many people had been maimed, raped, and killed in the deadly clash between farmers and herders in many parts of Nigeria. Recent banditry has also hindered inter and intrastate journeys. The national security system is weak to the extent that people can no longer sleep with their two eyes closed.<sup>3</sup> In this event, there have been local responses from state governors to safeguard the lives of their people. These responses are diverse and have included the establishment of armed groups to complement the effort of state security machineries.<sup>4</sup>

The state governors in the southwest region of Nigeria considered the possibility of re-enacting the old traditional security system known historically for the use of spiritual intelligence. In March 2020, a uniform security network named Amotekun was formed by the collaborative efforts of governors of Oyo, Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Ekiti, and Ondo to complement the efforts of the police and other conventional security networks in their states. Although this effort has met stiff opposition from the federal government on constitutional and political grounds, the Amotekun security network is a result of urgent intervention by southwest governors to save the region from banditry, terrorism, kidnaping, armed robbery, herders/farmers clash, and ritual killings.<sup>5</sup> To stem suspicion on the establishment of the Amotekun, the governors informed the populace about what the structure, purpose, and modalities of operations of Amotekun would be. Akeredolu, Ondo state governor assured the police of their involvement in the recruitment process of the Amotekun personnel.<sup>6</sup> Despite the preparedness of the governors to create professional synergy among the conventional security agencies and the Amotekun security network, the security initiative is struggling to find its foot amidst opposition from different parties, cabals, and federal.<sup>7</sup> Against this background, this article examines the politics, prospects, and challenges of the Amotekun regional security in Yoruba Southwest, Nigeria. This study adopts a qualitative method that utilises secondary sources such as newspapers, the internet, and extant scholarly works.

## Conceptual Clarification

### Explaining Security, Insecurity, and Amotekun

Understanding the concept of insecurity necessitates knowing what security means first. What constitutes security in modern times is a question that has never been answered satisfactorily by scholars. Its perception, even within one community,

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2 Godly, O. and Wilfred, U. (2012). 'National Security and Development in Nigeria' *African Journal of Business Management*. 6(23):6765-6770.

3 Ojo J., Oyewole S., Aina, F (2023). 'Forces of Terror: Armed Banditry and Insecurity in North-West Nigeria' *Democracy and Security*, 19:4, 319-346.

4 Obado-Joel, J. (2020). 'The Challenge of State-Backed Internal Security in Nigeria: Considerations for Amotekun' *Resolve Network Policy Note*.

5 Deepa, N. (2000). 'Voices of the Poor Can Anyone Hear Us?' <<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/131441468779067441/pdf/multi0page.pdf>>.

6 Abimbola, A., Ayodeji, O., and Oluyato, A. (2018). *Security Challenges and Management in Modern Nigeria* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing).

7 Feyisipo, R., and Iwok, I. (2020). 'Controversy Trails Attorney-General's Pronouncement of "Amotekun" as Illegal' (*Businessday NG*16 January 2020) <https://businessday.ng/politics/article/controversy-trails-attorney-generals-pronouncement-of-amotekun-as-illegal/>.

varies in time.<sup>8</sup> For example, until recently, most mainstream security studies characterised it in terms of a state's ability to protect its territorial integrity against real and imagined threats, as well as acts of aggression by other possible adversaries.<sup>9</sup> To this end, states build and equip armed forces towards achieving this goal. The essential assumption of this viewpoint is that the threat of violence, as well as a state's actual ability to use violence against an adversary, successfully deters threats and aggression.<sup>10</sup> At the domestic level, the belief is that internal law-enforcement agencies and other domestic intelligence instruments are required for a state to be secured. It encompasses all steps intended to protect and preserve the populace and the assets of persons, communities, enterprises, and the country from vandalism or destructive occurrences.<sup>11</sup>

Security necessitates protection from long-term threats and protection from disruptive events. It can be conceptualised as the assurance or knowledge that one is wanted, accepted, loved, and protected in one's community. It also conceptualises everyday predictability (knowing what to expect), safety (feeling safe), and escape from psychological injury (safety or protection from emotional stress) that results from the assurance or knowledge that one is wanted, accepted, loved, and protected in one's community or neighbourhood and by the people around. It is concerned with one's emotional and psychological sense of belonging to a social group that might provide protection. Security as a concept was divided into four components in this definition. These components, however, can be woven together to generate a composite definition of security that includes protection from all types of harm, either bodily, economic, or psychological. However, there is widespread agreement that security is defined not by the absence of dangers or security difficulties but by the ability to respond quickly and expertly to the difficulties provided by these threats.<sup>12</sup>

On the other side, insecurity is the polar opposite of security. However, due to the numerous means by which insecurity impacts humanity, multiple interpretations of the idea of insecurity have been assigned to the numerous ways it impacts people. Insecurity is defined as a lack of safety, risk, hazard, uncertainty, lack of confidence, insufficiently guarded or protected, lacking stability, troubledness, and lacking protection. Different people have used each of these to conceptualise insecurity; however, these various adjectives allude to a condition of vulnerability to damage and loss of life, property, or livelihood. Insecurity is a condition of worry or anxiety

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8 Emerson, S. and Solomon, H. (2018). *African Security in the Twenty-First Century*. Manchester University Press.

9 Okwori, A. (1995). 'Security and Deterrence: Towards Alternative Deterrence Strategy for Nigeria in the 21st Century and Beyond' *Defence Studies: Journal of the Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna*, 5, 19-28.>.

10 Alabi, D and Alabi, O. (2013). Issues and Problem in Nigerian Defence Policy in the 1990s A critical Review. *Nigeria Army Journal*, 3, 128-143. - References - Scientific Research Publishing' ([www.scirp.org](http://www.scirp.org)2013) [https://www.scirp.org/\(S\(i43dyn45teexjx455qlt3d2q\)\)/reference/referencespapers.aspx?referenceid=2528523](https://www.scirp.org/(S(i43dyn45teexjx455qlt3d2q))/reference/referencespapers.aspx?referenceid=2528523).

11 Ogunleye, G., Adewale, O., Alese B., and Ogunde, A. (2011). 'A Computer-Based Security Framework for Crime Prevention in Nigeria'. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272818852\\_A\\_COMPUTER-BASED\\_SECURITY\\_FRAMEWORK\\_FOR\\_CRIME\\_PREVENTION\\_IN\\_NIGERIA2011](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272818852_A_COMPUTER-BASED_SECURITY_FRAMEWORK_FOR_CRIME_PREVENTION_IN_NIGERIA2011).

12 Igbuzor, O. (2011) 'Peace and Security Education: A Critical Factor for Sustainable Peace and National Development'. *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies*, 2(1), 1-7. <http://www.academicjournals.org/IJPDS>.

resulting from a physical or claimed absence of protection.” It indicates a lack of or insufficient protection from danger. This conceptualisation reflects physical insecurity, which is the most prominent kind of insecurity, and it feeds into many other types of insecurity, including economic and social insecurity.<sup>13</sup>

Amotekun is also known as the Western Nigeria Security Network (WSN). It is an aggregation of cross-regional community-based armed groups (CBAGs) and community-based associations (CBAs) responsible for the security of rural and urban communities in Southwest Nigeria. Amotekun is an armed social movement backed up by sub-national governments in the southwest of Nigeria, which includes the following states: Ekiti, Lagos, Ondo, Ogun, Osun and Oyo.<sup>14</sup>

## Theoretical Framework

No single theory can explain the subject matter; therefore, the Elite Consensus, Securitisation, and Social Contract Theories have been selected for this study.

### Elite Consensus Theory (*‘Eniyan perete ni n selu’ a Yoruba proverb meaning ‘few people/ elites rule any town/city’*)

Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923), Gaetano Mosca (1858–1941), and Robert Michels are major proponents of elite theory. To them, throughout history, the dispensation of wealth and privilege was the preserve of the few. This can be seen in most traditional societies and monarchic government systems, where the administration of the society and decision-making is the sole duty of the monarch, chiefs and those with considerable influence over them. Even in democracies, the radius of influence was always small. Societies are almost invariably organised in layers within a pyramidal structure, with power and decision-making concentrated at the top. That pyramid is established and in the first instance is political systems, governance structure, culture, social circumstance, and several other influences. In certain civilisations, the social hierarchy or pyramid is narrow, concentrating power in a few hands. In contrast, in others, such as democratic nations, the pyramid’s summit is relatively flat.

These concerns are first analysed through the prism of religion and ethnicity; the enormity of ethnic and religious variety among Nigerian people makes it difficult for citizens to reach a consensus on national security matters.<sup>15</sup> Given Nigeria’s split elites (from a purely political standpoint), ideological homogeneity among political elites appears to be non-existent. It is noteworthy to mention that Nigeria’s slow (or non-existing) pace of development is not necessarily an outcome or proof of weak consensus among her elite. Several scholars have argued that there exists an

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13 Beland, D. (2005). *The Political Construction of Collective Insecurity: From Moral Panic to Blame Avoidance and Organized Irresponsibility* (Center for European Studies Working Paper Series 126).

14 Yahaya, J., and Bello, M. (2020). *An Analysis of the Constitutional Implication of South-West Regional Security Initiative: Amotekun*. African Scholar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 17(6), 161-192 [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344302242\\_An\\_Analysis\\_of\\_the\\_Constitutional\\_Implication\\_of\\_South\\_West\\_Regional\\_Security\\_Initiative\\_Amotekun](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344302242_An_Analysis_of_the_Constitutional_Implication_of_South_West_Regional_Security_Initiative_Amotekun).

15 Gaffey, C. (2015). ‘What Is Biafra and Why Are Some Nigerians Calling for Independence?’ (*Newsweek*) <https://www.newsweek.com/what-biafra-and-why-are-some-nigerians-calling-independence-401164>.

implicit consensus among Nigerian elites.<sup>16</sup> Nigerian elites have built a governance environment with positive loops around corruption in which decisions are made, promoting a corrupt system. The constitution of most African countries, which is then marketed as a document coming from the people, is a prime example of elite consensus.<sup>17</sup>

In Nigeria, elite consensus may have been based on adverse, anti-development, rent-seeking policies. However, having been faced with an alarming rate of insecurity in the southwest of Nigeria, the governors (elites) of the six southwest states decided to build elite consensus in a developmental context. This is achieved by; participation (providing a platform for contribution from all involved elites), collaboration (involving elites in the development of philosophies), cooperation (understanding individual preferences of elites and incorporating them into the elite's consensus), and agreement seeking (aiming for an agreement among involved elites).<sup>18</sup>

Like other rational agents, elites balance the costs and benefits of joining (or not joining) coalitions by looking at historical benefits, projected returns, and the penalties of refraining (or defection). Although this consensus-building approach may not appeal to all elites with vested interests, it assumes that obtaining elite consensus on an ideology is a better option for elite division. All the realisations mentioned above contributed to the formation of Amotekun in the Southwest.

## Securitisation Theory

This theory became popular in security studies due to the end of the cold war between the USA and the former Soviet Union.<sup>19</sup> The state-centric conception of security, otherwise known as traditional security, became an area of severe academic interrogations and queries. Securitisation theory shows us that national security policy is not a natural given, but carefully designated by politicians and decision-makers.<sup>20</sup>

Securitisation theory asserts that political concerns are labeled as dangerous, menacing, threatening, alarming, and other terms by a securitising actor with the social and institutional capacity to push the issue 'beyond politics.' As a result, security issues must be articulated as problems by securitising actors rather than simply being 'out there'. Traditional approaches to security in international relations are challenged by securitisation theory, which contends that situations are not inherently dangerous; rather, it is by referring to them as 'security' issues that they become security concerns.

Securitisation theorists (Ole Waever, Barry Buzan, Jaap de Wilde) identified the economic, sociological, military, political, and environmental sectors. A distinct

16 Reno, W. (1993). Old Brigades, Money Bags, New Breeds, and the Ironies of Reform in Nigeria. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 27(1), 66–87.

17 Shopeju, J. and Ojukwu, C. (2010). 'Elite Corruption and the Culture of Primitive Accumulation in 21st Century Nigeria. *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies*, 1(2), 15–24. <http://www.academicjournals.org/IJPDS>.

18 Monday, E., and Gerald, E. (2023) 'National Security and the Resort to Unconventional Security Networks by Nigeria's Geo-Political Zones: Implications for National Integration.' *African Renaissance*, 20(2), pp. 117-134.

19 Burton, J. (1979). *Deviance, Terrorism & War: The Process of Solving Unsolved Social and Political Problems*. New York: St Martin's Press.

20 Buzan, B. (1991). *People, States et Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era : 25th Anniversary*. London: Longman Publishing.

threat is expressed as threatening a referent item in each sector. In each sector, a specific threat is articulated as threatening a referent object. We recognise that existential risks are not objective but rather connect to the varied properties of each referent object through sectorialising security.

The rhetorical framework of decision-makers when framing an issue and attempting to persuade an audience to elevate the subject beyond politics is central to securitisation theory. To persuade an audience to take extraordinary measures, the securitising actor must draw attention to the threat and frequently exaggerate the urgency and level of the threat, communicate a point of no return, that is if we do not address this problem, everything else will become irrelevant, and offer a possible way out (lifting the issue above politics).

In using this theory to explain the subject matter, it is important to note that the governors of the six southwest states decided to label the incessant attacks by the herders, bandits, kidnappers, ritualists as alarming, menacing and threatening and in a bid to secure their states, they came up with the idea of forming a security network (Amotekun) to combat insecurity.

### **Social Contract Theory**

The Social Contract Theory was developed in the 16th and 17th centuries to establish political society by individual agreement. Appadorai attributes the first proper reference of the social contract theory to Hooker and others. They later refined the idea as a theory for developing their political doctrine, distinguishing between social contract as a governmental pact and social contract proper.<sup>21</sup> However, the most famous advocates of the social contract theory were Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The starting point treatises rests on a hypothetical state of nature against which the agreement between the ruler and the ruled was said to have taken place. The social contract theory asserts that individuals, by nature, are free and equal but choose to renounce some of their inherent liberty by entering civil society and creating a political authority to which they submit themselves for the sake of the benefits (security) given by civil society.<sup>22</sup>

It is important to note that since the people of the southwest have submitted their rights to the sovereign (governors), and going by the understanding of the social contract theory, the security of lives and property of the people automatically falls within the purview of the governors. In order to safeguard the people, the governors came together to form the security network that will, in turn, protect the people that have entrusted them with power.

### **Significance of the Elites theory, Securitisation and Social Contract Theory to Formation of Amotekun Security Network**

A careful look at the dominant concept across the three theories in use is 'government' who are considered as the elites or the few persons who are privileged to rule others according to elite theory; and who make security decisions when they perceive threats against the state according to securitisation theory; and who by social contract

21 Appadorai, A. (1975). *The Substance of Politics*. Oxford University Press.

22 Thomas M. (1999). *'Social Contract Theory'*. London: Penguin Books.

the citizens have surrendered their liberty and the power to make laws to them. This dominant concept gives credence to the primary function of government or state in securing both the lives and properties of citizens. This is what the southwest governors in collaboration have portrayed and are committed to. In this sense, the three theories are important in explaining the intervention, responsibility, and decisions of the governors in protecting their people.

### **Insecurity in Nigeria and its Sources**

Nigeria has been plagued by insecurity which has assumed a formidable role.<sup>23</sup> Nigeria has been enmeshed in a firebox of clashes that have cost several civilian lives, including foreigners and members of the Nigerian security personnel. Unfortunately, this wave of unrest seemed to have defied all security precautions and made a mockery of law enforcement agents and the enormous resources dedicated to the fight against insecurity.<sup>24</sup> The different regions of Nigeria have experienced regional security threats such as insurgency by militia groups in the north, kidnappings, and rituals associated killings in the east and south of the country. Furthermore, the west has also witnessed political and non-political assassinations. It has even been submitted that Nigerians have accepted insecurity as part of their lives.<sup>25</sup> Other regions, such as the south that have experienced conflict as a result of resource control, Christian-Muslim divides in the middle of the country, the civil war that plagued the east and recently, the Fulani herdsman crises that forced the government to be more proactive in her fight against security all over the country. The southwest is only bedeviled by ritual killings and systemic kidnappings and has experienced less terror than other regions.<sup>26</sup> There are various sources of insecurity in Nigeria and some of these include the following:

**Inadequate policy formulation and implementation:** Poor policy formulation and implementation have contributed to insecurity in Nigeria. Many people in authority take advantage of their positions to force down policies that impoverish ‘the many’ in so much as it benefits them and a few others. Lack of human-centered policies in Nigeria has led to increased crimes resulting from a desperate need to survive. Insecurity is a result of a malignant environment dominated by man’s insensitivity to man. The current discourse about petroleum subsidy is a case in point. All Nigerians (the rich and the poor) use petrol either for generators to power electricity for household uses, factories, or farms. All Nigerians travel or transport products, including food with fuel-powered engines.<sup>27</sup> Those who must drink clean water provide boreholes for themselves but with fuel. Even educational institutions need

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23 Onifade, C., Imhonopi, D., and Urim, U. (2013). Addressing the Insecurity Challenge in Nigeria: The Imperative of Moral Values and Virtue Ethics. *Global Journal of Human Social Science Political Science*, 2(1): 53-64.

24 Obarisagbon, I. and Akintoye, O. (2019). Insecurity Crisis in Nigeria: The Law Enforcement Agents a Panacea? *Journal of Sociology and Social Work*, 7(1): 44-51.

25 Onwuka, A. (2019). ‘Nigerians Have Accepted Insecurity as Part of Life’. *Punch Newspapers* 3 September 2019) <https://punchng.com/nigerians-have-accepted-insecurity-as-part-of-life/?amp>

26 Nwagbosa, C. (2012). Security Challenges and Economy of the Nigerian State (2007-2011). *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 2(6), 244-258.

27 Gbenga, A. & Augoye, J. (2011). ‘Ibru’, *Astute Businessman Takes a Bow*. *The Punch*, 21 November p. 3.

power, which is more readily supplied through generators using diesel or fuel. As a result, fuel is a commodity that everyone in Nigeria uses (directly or indirectly). However, all the processing plants in the country are believed to be in a state of dilapidation and fuel derived from crude oil (Nigeria's main product) is imported. Raising the cost too high for a product like fuel will negatively impact the welfare of all Nigerians, particularly the poor.

**Flawed justice delivery system:** The system for delivering justice also does not encourage the fight against insecurity. Offenders of grievous cases may get very light sentences where they are not entirely let go. Many high-profile crimes usually end up in similar ways. In such a situation, criminals are emboldened to commit crimes, and the innocent are frequently imprisoned and punished.

**Corruption and ethnicity:** National security has been compromised with the heavy corruption in the Nigerian political system. The existence of two anti-graft agencies, Independent Corrupt Practices (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crimes (EFCC), since 1999 appears to have done little to eradicate corrupt practices in Nigeria totally. Former national security advisor Colonel Sambo Dasuki was arraigned for illegal diversion of \$2.1 billion arms fund. The arms fund was meant to purchase sophisticated arms for soldiers in counter-insurgency operations. Unethical work behaviour among the security personnel has also weakened the security system. Some security personnel consider bribes and ethnicity more than their primary responsibility. Some are influenced by their religious sentiments and are swallowed up by their interests in serving their people rather than the nation.

**Poverty and small arms proliferation** have also been attributed; in Nigeria, around 70 per cent of the populace is abysmal, improvised in many other developing economies. The failure of successive administrations in Nigeria to address challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequitable distribution of wealth among ethnic nationalities is one of the major causes of insecurity in Nigeria.<sup>28</sup> This predisposes the poor to violence, which is also fueled by the ease of access to small arms. Arms could be accessed as low as £10.00. So, even the poor could access arms and use such arms to cause havoc. The import of weapons by developing countries has risen dramatically.<sup>29</sup>

### **Amotekun Regional Security in Yoruba Southwest, Nigeria**

In 2019, with increasing incidents of violence and attacks on farmers and travellers, the governors of Southwestern Nigerian states initiated a campaign to establish Amotekun ('Leopard' in the Yoruba language), or the Western Nigeria Security Network (WSN). They cited concerns about the capacity of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) to provide security to rural and urban residents in the region.<sup>30</sup> Amotekun was to complement the operations of national security forces, such as the NPF. In March

28 Nwagbosa, C. (2012). Security Challenges and Economy of the Nigerian State (2007-2011). *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 2(6), 244-258.

29 Todaro M., and Smith S. (2003). *Economic Development Persons Education*. 8th Edition, India: Pearson Education.

30 Ojelu, H. (2020). 'Constitutional Implication of Operation Amotekun,' *Vanguard Nigeria* <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/01/constitutional-implication-of-operation-amotekun>.



2020, Amotekun was established by law, making state governments responsible for its funding and administration.

However, certain characteristics of Amotekun distinguish it from other similar security providers, such as the civilian joint task force (CJTF). First, unlike the CJTF, which operates as a single entity, Amotekun is designed to operate as a paramilitary force made up of a collection of existing community-based armed groups (CBAGs), such as, the hunters' association, Agbekoya farmers association, Oodua People's Congress (OPC) in Southwest Nigeria, socio-political groups such as the Pan-Yoruba socio-political group, Afenifere as well as units of newly recruited corps members. Given this distinction, for this policy note, Amotekun will be referred to as a state backed supra-CBAG (SBSC). Defining Amotekun as an SBSC underlines its unique character as part of an aggregation of cross-regional CBAGs and community-based associations (CBAs) responsible for the security of rural and urban communities in Southwest Nigeria.

The various groups that constituted the nucleus of Amotekun have a long history of security mobilisation in the Nigerian Southwest. Initially formed as a response to political contestation, these groups eventually expanded their mandate into security operations. From 1968 to 1969, the Agbekoya Farmers Group conducted a successful violent uprising against the military rule in Western Nigeria in reaction to a new tax policy on peasant farmers.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, in the run-up to the Fourth Republic in 1999, the Yoruba Council of Leaders established Afenifere, a formidable socio-cultural and political organisation. Afenifere leaders are considered stewards of the Yoruba ethnic group's socio-cultural and political agenda, one of Nigeria's three major ethnic groups.<sup>32</sup> The Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC) is also a socio-cultural group with a militia corps committed to defending and maintaining the Yoruba ethnic group's political interest. Although OPC and Afenifere had similar principles, their leadership and membership did not necessarily coincide.

These security groups are to serve as the base for the operation of Amotekun with the idea of mobilising around Yoruba ethnic solidarity, especially the common ancestry of various Yoruba groups and communities of common origin as descendants of Oduduwa. This mobilisation involved attempts to appease Yoruba gods and deities to protect their lands against the enemies. The means of achieving this include using time-tested and potent fortification by charms and other traditional means of members of various security for the adequate performance of their assignments. The story of the effectiveness of charms in defense of Yoruba course in the past has been well-documented by scholars, especially wars with Fulani and against the Nigerian security operatives during Agbekoya crisis, among others.<sup>33</sup>

Given their past, the groups' engagement in Amotekun raises concerns about what their political goals or ambitions might be or turn into if not restrained by the federal, state, or community security-related procedures. Second, unlike the CJTF, Amotekun does not have a central purpose against Boko Haram insurgents, despite having a comparable mandate. The clarity of the CJTF's objective and target opposition is a

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31 Adeniran, T. (1974). 'The Dynamics of Peasant Revolt: A Conceptual Analysis of the Agbekoya Parapo Uprising in the Western State of Nigeria'. *Journal of Black Studies* 4 (4), 363-375.

32 Kumolu, C. (2020). 'Amotekun Is Tokenism, Struggle for Real Solution Continues,' *Vanguard Nigeria* <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/01/amotekun-is-tokenism>.

33 Adeniran, T. (1974). 'The Dynamics of Peasant Revolt: A Conceptual Analysis of the Agbekoya Parapo Uprising in the Western State of Nigeria.' *Journal of Black Studies* 4 (4), 363-375.

significant aspect in its community acceptability and success. Amotekun's mandate, on the other hand, is vaguely defined as 'helping internal security forces'. This vagueness in mandate lends to fears of the potential for operational overreach and resultant abuses, especially targeting other ethnic groups. Third, unlike other state backed CBAGs and paramilitary corps that predate it across Nigeria, Amotekun is the first regional SBSC in the country. Moreover, unlike the CJTF, Amotekun is backed by governors of Nigerian states rather than the Nigerian federal government or NPF. There is currently no structure that defines the operational and administrative jurisdictions of the NPF and state governments to Amotekun.

There is no gainsaying the fact that policing is local, ditto security.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, it should be conducted from a local front, as against the current system that features a unified policing command under the authority of a federal appointed Inspector General. This position was supported by General Theophilus Danjuma (Rtd.), who charged Nigerians to defend themselves. The *Amotekun* development is a decision in response to the calls to legalise the Oodua People's Congress (OPC), promote regional security, which is already popular in the east and northern parts of the country, and eliminate the escalating terror concerns in the southwest.

Without obvious concern for political affiliation, the southwestern governors comprising of:

1. Governor Babajide Sanwo - Olu- Lagos State
2. Governor Dapo Abiodun - Ogun State
3. Governor Seyi Makinde - Oyo State
4. Governor Rotimi Akeredolu - Ondo State
5. Governor Gboyega Oyetola - Osun State
6. Governor Kayode Fayemi - Ekiti State

The governors above unanimously agreed to set up a regional security network because the mainstream police have not arrested the rising threats of terror in the region. Compared to the mainstream police, Eghagha opines that the presence of the Oodua People's Congress, a local paramilitary security organisation sends more threat to thieves in a society than the Nigerian Police and its cohorts, against this background.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, such a force with similar credibility should be welcomed to minimise the inevitable escalation of terror in the region due to the police's apparent incapacitation.

Another reason for establishing the *Amotekun* security network and the demand for its legalisation is inherent in the presence of *Hisbah*, the Joint Civilian Taskforce, and the most recently established Operation *Shege Ka Fasa* in the North. Abating the fear of barbaric practice, the governor of Ondo State, Rotimi Akeredolu, equally noted that those willing to work in the security network would be trained by security experts.

### **Prospects and Challenges of Amotekun in Yoruba Southwest, Nigeria.**

The establishment of Amotekun as a regional security network was greeted with many uproars. The Attorney General of the Federation immediately declared *Amotekun*

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34 Eghagha, H. (2020). Amotekun and the Future of Our Republic.' *Guardianng*. <https://m.guardian.ng/opinion/amotekun-and-the-future-of-our-republic>.

35 Eghagha, H. (2020). 'Amotekun and the Future of Our Republic.' *Guardianng*. (3 February 2020) <https://m.guardian.ng/opinion/amotekun-and-the-future-of-our-republic> Accessed on 26 May 2021.

illegal after its inauguration in Ibadan, without following the legal, due process. The Amotekun, on the other hand, had already begun to gain some credibility and acceptability, as spiritual and traditional elders quickly accepted its establishment. APC national leader Asiwaju Ahmed Tinubu also called for a peaceful resolution of the conflict and its emergence generated with some functionaries of the federal government. He called for negotiation between the federal government and governors of the southwestern states on the continuous existence of Amotekun. Tinubu's call is interesting since it is in keeping with the ideas of alternative dispute resolution, which is based on the peaceful resolution of disagreements.

Since the formation of the Amotekun corps, it has been intervening in security-related cases in the states of the southwest, especially in assisting the police in curbing illegal miners and petty thieves. They arrested four suspected kidnappers in Eda Oniyo, Ilejemeje local government. They rescued a businessman, Happiness Ajayi, kidnapped on Christmas day on the Isan-Iludun-Ekiti road in Oye local government.<sup>36</sup> In Ondo state, Amotekun has been able to resolve cases of destruction of farmlands and threats to life in rural communities. Few months after the security network was launched, it championed 'operation clean up,' in which suspected criminals who are about to act or caught in the act were apprehended.<sup>37</sup> Ayotunde and Kazeem noted that these achievements within little time indicate what Amotekun could achieve in the future. By this, Amotekun would serve as a security template for other regions in combatting crimes.<sup>38</sup>

Amotekun would give the traditional rulers a chance to monitor the security situation in their localities better. If adequately managed, traditional leaders can count on the security network for urgent intervention. They would also serve as a watchdog in watching the excesses of other conventional security institutions in the southwest region.

Although the Amotekun has been effective, it suffers from a lack of support from the federal government. There has also been little or no collaboration with the police because they think the Amotekun officers are overzealous. Some people have argued that the initial idea of mobilising Amotekun operatives around invincibility of the Yoruba warriors through the engagement of Hunters, Agbekoyas, and similar groups are not being pursued by some states. This is reflected in the recruitment of graduates who do not subscribe to such strategic spiritual intelligence for security purposes, into Amotekun corps.<sup>39</sup>

Also, there have been accusations of some governors' ambivalent attitude and paying lip service to the idea due to political correctness of not antagonising the federal government that has shown its opposition to the regional security network. There is the challenge of funding as the states are limited financially compared to the federal government and against the fact that security is still primarily a federal government affair in Nigeria. They (Amotekun officers) are not well-equipped to

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36 'Thisday (2021).<https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2019/06/29/gunmen-kill-farmer-in-ekiti/amp/>'.

37 *The Hope Newspaper* (2020). [www.thehopenewspaper.com](http://www.thehopenewspaper.com).

38 Abimbola A., Ayodeji, O. and Oluyato, A. (2019). *Security Challenges and Management in Modern Nigeria*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

39 Nwagbosa, C. (2012). Security Challenges and Economy of the Nigerian State (2007-2011). *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 2(6), 244-258.

deal with insecurity in the region. Also, the Amotekun is limited in its capacity to use arms and ammunition by the federal government. This constitutes a constraint in facing criminal groups with more sophisticated and dangerous arms and ammunition.

## Conclusion

Amotekun regional security network has come to stay in Nigerian security architecture due to some governors and the people of the Southwest's commitment to the idea. Recently Governor Akeredolu of Ondo state has stated in response to the recent remark of President Muhammadu Buhari that the states should defend their lands against any form of attacks, that Amotekun would form the nucleus of state police in the Southwest of Nigeria. Prospects exist for the security network to succeed primarily based on familiarity with the terrain, among other factors. However, to make the activities of the corps more robust to tackle the various security issues, there is a need for more equipment. The corps must also use modern technologies, train and re-train its operatives and create an efficient feedback mechanism. It also needs a proper synergy with other security outfits to avoid unnecessary suspicion, conflicts, and deployment for sectarian purposes. Lastly, the idea of Amotekun and their core operational principles has further confirmed that we cannot do away with our indigenous knowledge in the fight against insecurity.

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