

**AN ONTOLOGICAL SURVEY OF CRIME AND CRIMINALITY IN NIGERIA:
STATING THE CAUSES AND SEEKING SOLUTIONS**

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Abstract

Philosophy is generally a field that inquires into the general conditions of existence and provides possible solutions to the puzzles of the cosmos. Apart from offering existential guides to human beings on personal relationship, philosophy also alters attitude to natural and artificial phenomena that make up human environment, and above all seeks to direct man's actions towards the good. This is perhaps why there seems to be a philosophy of everything that exists. Taking a critical ontological look at Nigeria, it is apparent that crime and criminality has kept soaring exponentially over the past few years. Major crimes ravaging Nigeria today include armed robbery, rape, banditry, kidnapping, murder, terrorism, cyber-crimes, bribery and corruption among others. It has therefore become expedient for a philosophical interrogation of the rising tide of crime and criminality in the country with a view to charting a better way forward towards curbing criminality. This is the thrust of this paper. The study adopted the qualitative research design by relying on secondary sources of data collection. The expository and evaluative methods were used for data analysis. The study found out that even though many steps have been taken towards curbing criminality in Nigeria, little has been achieved, thereby prompting a re-assessment of the strategies that ought to be employed. It is this new strategy that this ontological survey sets out to project.

Keywords: Crime, Criminality, Nigeria, Terrorism, Causes, Impact

Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increase in the occurrence of crime and criminal activities which have continued to aggravate fear and tension among the citizenry in Nigeria. What then is the nexus between this growing religiosity with concomitant growth in crime rate? What is

religion supposed to do in order to curb crime in Nigeria? This important question is the main focus of this paper.

Conceptual Clarification

Ontology

Ontology is a branch of philosophy (specifically metaphysics), which studies the nature, mode of existence and operations of any being or reality. Its thrust is to assess things in their becoming, how they exist, their gradation and relation to other beings (Lawson, Latsis and Martins 90). From earliest times, ontology was treated as a major aspect of metaphysics. Among the issues that fall under the rubrics of ontology is the kind of entities that exist and the nature of their groupings. It is also an aspect of ontology to differentiate words that refer to different entities and reasons for such differentiations. It seeks to answer questions such as: “What can be said to exist?”, “What is a thing?”, “Into what categories, if any, can we sort existing things?” etc. Philosophers have classified ontologies variously based on the level of abstraction and applicability. However, agreement is that *it is* a branch of metaphysics concerned with the nature and relations of being. It is the investigation into the basic categories of being and how they relate to one another. Ontology determines fundamental nature of *categories of being* and discusses why and how the items in those categories could be really said to “be”. In other words, ontology inquires into whatever belongs to the lexicon of being (Harvey 40).

Crime/Criminality

The term *crime* does not, in modern criminal law, have any simple and universally accepted definition. However, a crime could be defined as an act that is reprehensible and illegal for which someone can be punished by a constituted authority; it is a grave offense especially against morality. In other words, a crime is an unlawful act punishable by a state or other authority (Martin 317). On the other hand, criminality could simply be defined as the state, act or quality of being criminal or possessing and perpetrating criminal activities. In other words, criminality is used in reference to a certain personality profile that causes the most alarming sorts of crimes in a society. Hirschi affirms that “criminality is a style of strategic behavior characterized by self-centeredness, indifference to the suffering and needs of others, and low self-control” (73). Very related to criminality is the concept of crime. In ordinary language, a crime is an unlawful act punishable by a state or other authority. The term *crime* does not, in modern criminal law, have any simple and universally accepted definition, though statutory definitions have been provided for certain purposes. The most popular view is that crime is a category created by law; in other words, something is a crime if declared as such by the relevant and applicable law (Gates 68). Katz defines a crime as an act harmful not only to some individual but also to a community, society, or the state (91). The notion that acts such as murder, rape, and theft are to be prohibited exists worldwide. Such acts are forbidden and punishable by law.

A Survey of Crimes and Criminality in Nigeria

From the desert-threatened North through the rivers traversing the central parts, down to the creeks of the South and across, Nigeria today is ridden with crime and criminality of various magnitudes. From occasional misdemeanors, crimes have climaxed to unprecedented cases of violent felonious crimes ranging from organized crimes of Boko Haramism and Militant Terrorism to Assassination, Cyber Crimes, Human and Drug Trafficking, Money

Laundering, Rape, Banditry, etc. To adequately thematise the tide, the following are the major crimes that ravage Nigeria today.

i. Armed Robbery

In the last decade the rate of robbery with the use of sophisticated arms has become common place in Nigeria. Armed robbery is an important subject that has been studied widely by criminologists across the world. It involves the use of different levels of force and an array of different weapons to steal from individuals or corporate institutions (Mimiko 74). Apart from organized robbery where very sophisticated weapons are used, other common instruments used in Nigeria are locally made guns and knives/machetes. Armed robbery attacks are usually directed at banks, shops, petrol stations, churches, domestic houses and highways or motorways. Armed robbers use weapon(s) to threaten, force and deprive a person or persons of the right to private, public or corporate belongings (Perri et al 122). The rate of armed robbery has gone so chronic in Nigeria that it is sometimes perpetrated even in broad day and in seemingly unexpected places. Sometimes armed robbers terrorize a whole neighbourhood for many days with impunity. Bank robberies have become recurring news on the media of communication. Even churches and pastors' residences have not been spared by the menace of armed robbery today.

ii. Trafficking in Persons:

Over time, human trafficking has assumed a worrisome dimension in Nigeria. In fact, the *International Centre for Investigative Reporting* observes that “Nigeria has been identified as a source, transit, and destination country for children subjected to trafficking in persons including forced labour and forced prostitution” (41). Trafficked Nigerian children are recruited from rural areas within the country's borders – women and girls for involuntary domestic servitude and sexual exploitation, and boys for forced labour in street vending, domestic servitude, mining, and begging. Others are taken from Nigeria to other countries for servitude or prostitution, and some are subjected to hazardous jobs in Nigeria's granite mines. *Shaibu* substantiates this when he stated that “Nigerian women and girls are taken to Europe, especially to Italy and Russia, and to the Middle East and North Africa, for forced prostitution” (31).

On a national scale in Nigeria, according to *International Centre for Investigative Reporting* about 200,000 people have been victims of child trafficking and forced labour from 2010-2017 (51). Many children are trafficked within and outside the country to be used as helps, to cook, as stewards, as nannies, as launderers, etc. The distinguishing mark of such children is obvious: they are often not paid for their services; even if they are of school age, they do not attend school; they do not have time at all to rest, play and study like children of their age; from their dressing, they could easily stand out in company of other children due to the worn or oversized cloths they are clad in; they do not enjoy the privilege of mattresses but are banished to the mat or the cold floor at night; they eat left-overs after the rest of the family has had their fill; they are spanked or heavily beaten for acts that would have hardly gotten a verbal condemnation should they have been committed by children of the same age who are not trafficked (Shaibu 17). Generally, trafficked persons are usually subjected to inhuman treatment which is unethical to human existence. This is why it has become expedient to bring this modern day form of slavery into limelight so as to expose its ugly consequences. The above scenario practically underscores the fact that the foundation of a progressive society is determined by the quality of its moral and ethical principles.

iii. Rape

Rape is among the most rampant as well as clandestine crimes in the Nigerian society today. On the streets, in homes, in market places, in educational institutions and even in places of worship, rapes have been reported in recent day Nigeria. Rape involves “any sexual contact or behaviour that occurs without explicit consent of the victim” (Oliva 72). Sexual assault comes in many different forms. However, *any* unwanted sexual contact, whether it is verbal, visual, or physical, is sexual assault. While the problem is rampant, victims are often shamed into feeling that what has happened to them is their fault. As a result, victims may wait years, or their entire lives, without telling anyone. A critical look at the effects of rape on both the community and individual reveals that there is a new urgency for society to voice their protest against this social menace. In the opinion of Berger, “the time is now and the place is anywhere in the world where this issue is not being given the attention that is warranted to fight against the biasness towards rape victims” (101). It is time that all humans demand changes to all societies that perpetrate such injustices world-wide. It is time to provide the education and information and encourage discussions that will change society's attitudes towards rape and find ways to eradicate this intolerable social issue once and for all.

iv. Kidnapping

Throughout history kidnapping has been a universal phenomenon that poses a challenge to humanity, but the way one falls victim depends on the society, especially the nature of the social structures and the moral value of the people in such environment. Nigeria has been weighed down by the menace of kidnapping over the years. In Nigeria, kidnapping of people for ritual or extortive or ransom purposes cut across all classes of people - children, foreign workers, traditional rulers government officials, religious leaders medical practitioners, lecturers, politicians and some commoners (Lemert 85). This phenomenon has enriched the perpetrators who now contend with the nation in the arena of legitimate use of force and monopoly of violence. The menace of kidnapping is a reflection of moral decadence in Nigeria and ought to be addressed as urgently as possible.

v. Organised/Street Crime

So far, it has been observed that most crime organisations in Nigeria typically do not follow the mafia-type model used elsewhere (Okwu 214). They appear to be less formal and more organized along familial and ethnic lines, thus making them less susceptible by infiltration from law enforcement. This is further hampered by the fact there are at least 250 distinct ethnic languages in Nigeria. Prominent in this group are street crime perpetrators popularly called “Area Boys”. These are loosely organized gangs of street children and teenagers, composed mostly of males, who roam the streets of Nigerian towns, perpetrating different magnitudes of crimes including rape, snatching of bags, picking pockets, drug addiction, assisting more organized criminals, fraudulent begging, etc. At motor parks, they extort money from passers-by, public transporters and traders, sell illegal drugs, act as informal security guards, and perform other “odd jobs” in return for compensation (215). This menace is rising steadily and assuming worrisome proportions in various Nigerian cities and deserves urgent attention.

vi. Cyber Crimes

No doubt, “Yahoo Boys” has become a popular decimal in the crime lexicon of Nigeria. Cybercrime involves using computers and Internet by individuals to commit crime. In the past

few years in Nigeria, the alarming growth of the internet and its wide applicability has led to increase in cyber crimes. In Nigeria today, several internet assisted crimes known as cybercrimes are committed daily in various forms such as fraudulent electronic mails, pornography, identity theft, hacking, cyber harassment, spamming, Automated Teller Machine spoofing, piracy and phishing. Cybercrime is a threat against various institutions and people who are connected to the internet either through their computers or mobile technologies (Hassan, Lass and Makinde 85). The effects of cybercrimes on organizations, the society and the country in general include reducing the competitive edge of organizations, waste of production time and damage to the image of the country, etc. The exponential increase of this crime in the society has become a strong issue that should not be overlooked. The impact of this kind of crime can be felt on the lives, economy and international reputation of a nation. With Nigeria venturing into cashless society, there is a need for cybercrimes menace to be minimized if not completely eradicated.

vii. Terrorism and Armed Banditry

Among the various challenges of modern day life in Nigeria is the menace of terrorism and armed banditry. Terrorism and banditry are a challenge in various ways. Firstly, terrorism and banditry are reprehensible because they use illegitimate and indiscriminate force, treating people with extreme hostility and callousness as a means to an end. For instance, when one considers the Boko Haram terrorist group in the North Eastern Nigeria, a clear picture of their hostility and heartlessness comes to bare. Human beings are slaughtered, maimed, rendered homeless in their scores almost on daily basis. This, in fact, has become one of the greatest challenges facing Nigeria today (Iwara 154). The second reason of terrorism and banditry being a challenge follows necessarily from the first. In order to curb the activities of terrorists and bandits, restrictions are often placed on innocent citizens. Given the degree of violence which terrorists and bandits are prepared to inflict, counter-terrorism policy provides the classic example of the difficulty of reconciling security and liberty. In the view of Iwara, "To restrict the rights of citizens in the name of public safety may compromise the openness of society, defence of which is a prime reason for combating terrorism" (155). The several States of Emergency which have variously been placed on some of the terrorist-prone states in Nigeria can testify to this. Terrorists desire the widest possible audience so that their demands and horrific events become known. Their campaign seeks to circumvent the normal political process through threats and violence. By intimidating a target population, terrorists want this audience to feel sufficiently vulnerable to apply pressure on decision makers to give into terrorist demands. This leaves the populace in fear and living in constant suspicion. In most cases, this hampers the unity of the country, especially when such attacks are directed at particular tribes or groups of people. And this has been the case with Nigeria.

Major Causes of Crime/Criminality In Nigeria

Criminality in Nigeria has a wide range of causative factors. These factors can be viewed distinctively, yet they are intrinsically linked to one another as one concept directly leads to another. They include the following:

i. Poverty and Lack of Economic Opportunities

Poverty has become a popular index of describing majority of Nigerians. It is obvious that a greater percentage of Nigerians live in excruciating poverty. This poverty is occasioned by the lack of economic opportunities open to the citizens of the country. Eban rightly asserts that

one of the factors that promote violent crimes in Nigeria is the socio-economic condition that sustains widespread poverty and unemployment in Nigeria (99). Unfortunately, the spate of unemployment has continued to increase rather rapidly. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported that the population of unemployed Nigerians increased by 518,000 to over 1.45million between December 2015 and March 31, 2016 (*Daily Sun* 15). The high level of unemployment in Nigeria has serious security implications because an idle mind is the devil's workshop. Esu asserts this by stating, “the increased rate of sectarian violence, crimes and terrorism are connected with unemployment” (88). It is very difficult if not impossible to guarantee peace in an environment where you have very high poverty and unemployment rate. This is because where the youths cannot get clean jobs, they make themselves available for odd jobs to stay alive which takes any imaginable criminal dimension and undermines the unity of the polity.

It is apparent that a nation that has few wealthy people and the larger majority wallowing in abject poverty and degradation creates room for ill-feeling and suicidal instincts. Ikoh buttresses this by stating that a socio-economic system that creates a great wide gulf between the haves and the have-nots cannot but become a nurturing ground for evil acts as evident in Nigeria today (121). Nigeria operates a socio-economic order that fosters wealth accumulation by the political class at the expense of equity, productivity, justice, fair play and respect for human rights of the citizens as well as rule of law and that accounts for why it has become a breeding ground for violent crime and instability. The truth remains that cultures that stress economic success as an important goal but nevertheless strongly restrict access to opportunities will have higher levels of corruption (113). This probably explains the high incidence of unemployment in Nigeria. Ogabo and Dokpesi rightly assert that “Many Nigerians are highly achievement oriented, but they have relatively low access to economic opportunities” (7). *Many people who are even employed are not paid as at when due.* For example many teachers work for months without getting paid. Yet, the society expects them to be honest and productive. Many of those teachers working without pay are parents, who are expected to train their children in schools with empty wallets. Under this condition, many citizens would reject the rule of the game (societal norms) and criminally innovate to make ends meet. Many people who are readily convinced or lured into obnoxious groups in the country are from this group.

ii. Leadership Challenge

Since the attainment of independence and nationhood, the most critical challenge confronting Nigeria appears to be credible leadership. Nigeria today, like most parts of Africa is bedeviled by the leadership factor which has been responsible partly or wholly for her underdevelopment and national disintegration. This has led scholars like Chinua Achebe in his work *The Trouble with Nigeria* and Ojakaminor Efeturi in his book *Nigeria's Ghana Must Go Happenings* to maintain that the backwardness of Nigeria is occasioned by the failure of its political actors. It is the opinion of Adebayo that government poor attitude to crime control is another reason why violent crimes have remained on the increase in Nigeria (112). This is indicative of the fact that Nigeria has not been blessed with good leaders who are committed to fighting crime by ensuring that the full weight of the law are employed on law offenders. Our governments no longer pay attention to the primary functions of providing security, neither do they listen to the plight of the poor masses. Commenting on government poor attitude to crime prevention and control, Eban posits that it is unfortunate that in some cases when real perpetrators are arrested, they are hurriedly released at the instance of “order from above”. A critical look at the situation proves that there is failure or poor attitude of the government to address the problem when it was evolving; when the government failed to tackle the

challenges from the onset, the crime grew into larger proportions. What this translates is that the government in most cases lacks the will to deal decisively with security challenges in the nation, because of their overt and covert interest.

iii. Moral Bankruptcy

Obviously, most social norms which hold society together, acquire their binding sense and norms of sacredness from religion. Every religion has a set of moral codes that stipulate the dos and don'ts for the regulation of human conduct (Uzochukwu 91). These requirements for a healthy society seem to be on the want in Nigeria, especially where the people concerned tend to say nothing and do nothing about the moral virtues of the citizens. Okeshola and Adeta had noted that, morality as an important ingredient of living in human society, is increasingly being abandoned in private and public life in our society in Nigeria (77). He cited examples from news reports on cult killings, armed robbery, assassination and murder. Criminality is thus a pointer to moral anarchy in Nigeria. Moral anarchy is an indication of the decline of religious spirituality.

iv. Compromised Security Apparatus

Another major factor that promotes criminality in Nigeria is the activities of some security agents who have rather become collaborators with criminal cartels. The situation where some members of national security agencies like the Nigeria Police collaborate with criminals with whom they share their ransom (Oliva 62), cannot but foster insecurity in the country. It is most worrisome to hear the police advice some victims of kidnap to cooperate with kidnappers by paying the demanded sum instead of helping victims to get kidnappers arrested and handed over to relevant authorities for adequate punishment. Berger avers that the increasing atrocious crimes committed in Nigeria has once again brought to fore the allegation of complicity of some members of police force with criminals to aid and abate violent crimes (81).

Effects of Crime/Criminality on the Nigerian Society

All through the world, the effects of crime and criminality on individuals and society at large have never been palatable. It is almost impossible to predict exactly what effects an individual victim will suffer. People react very differently to similar offences and where one person may be seriously affected, another might experience only minor or short-term effects. Those who are more vulnerable (such as people who are poor, live in deprived areas or have other life stressors) and those who have been previously victimized are more likely to find a greater impact on them.

At the individual level, a victim of a crime may possibly experience many different kinds of effects. There is often the direct cost and inconvenience due to theft of or damage to property. Often, there are physical effects of injury through violent crimes. There are usually psychological effects such as anger, depression or fear, which, in serious cases, can cause sleeplessness, flashbacks to the offence or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Omoyibo and Akpomera 172). This leads to feelings of anxiety through shock that such a thing has happened and worries about revictimisation, sometimes leading to feelings of loss of trust in one's community and in society.

The effects of a crime can be felt not only by the individual, but also by their family and those close to them. Crime against businesses is also not an effect-free area as both managers and staff are likely to be affected. The knowledge of victimisation and its shock can spread out through a neighbourhood creating a 'ripple effect'. Some effects may only be short-term.

Victims tend to cope with financial loss quite quickly, by using their own resources, or with the help of friends and family. However, psychological and social effects can be very long-lasting, over months or even years. A small proportion of the most seriously affected (who tend to be victims of serious physical assaults, robberies and particularly rape, as well as the relatives of victims of homicide) may develop PTSD, which will need professional psychiatric or psychological help (Mohammed 96).

The high wave of criminality also negatively affects the socio-economic as well as political activities of the nation as a whole. According to Eban, criminal occurrences usually aggravate emotions and tensions from the people in the society, it brings about “outrage, sadness, anger, disgust, and shock” (90). For instance, armed robbery occurrences do induce fear in people which may have adverse effect on their health; as well as their socio-economic life. Ikoh maintains that crime “inflicts severe strain on the social fabric and can lead to moral decadence and the disintegration of the society” (117). Every violent crime is always followed by wounds and injuries which could result into hospitalization of the victims. Victims of criminal activities may suffer shock; damage of vital organs or part of the body and even permanent disability. Besides, violent crime may bring about premature death, and consequently, turn members of the society into orphans, widows and widowers.

On the nation's economy, violent crimes could drastically affect manufacturing businesses, especially those that depend on raw materials from parts of the nation for production. Violent crimes could block sources of raw materials for manufacturing businesses, thereby inhibiting productions as well as marketing of finished products. It could even lead to relocating of business environments in order to avoid losses of business properties (Adebayo 87).

On Nigeria's international image, criminality has continued to give Nigerians a negative image before the International Community. According to Eban, Nigerians are always subjected to series of “discriminatory treatments” as a result of suspicion of Nigerians wherever they are sighted in foreign land. Nigerians are considered or seen as criminals by the International Community, hence, they are subjected to a thorough search and screening before foreign agencies (89).

Seeking Solutions

The role of philosophy as a key component of the problem solving element of society has been established by scholars (Katz 108). This means that knowledge acquired from philosophy is an important social control that can inhibit deviance and crime. Philosophy helps to guide and shape people's view of the world, providing values that direct their behaviour. Gates reports that prior studies have found that people with higher levels of philosophical knowledge are less likely to engage in crimes like substance use and abuse and have lower rates of offending (62). This means that philosophical principles can be harnessed towards curbing crime/criminality in Nigeria. How can this be done?

The Role of Government: Government has enormous responsibilities towards the curbing of crime and criminality in Nigeria. Suffice it to say in the words of Esu that “the government is more responsible for the stability of the country than any other group or individual” (93). This is true because it is the government that is responsible for structuring and executing programmes that would ensure economic reinvigoration of the country. It is the leader that charts and navigates the way for the flock to follow and it is the leader's action, inaction and body language that dictate the tunes for the dance steps of the public. For instance, if a leader eschews corruption, it will be difficult for those below him to indulge in such practice; and if

the leader is deep neck in it, it becomes a free-for-all. In doing this, government at all levels must realize the fact that Nigeria is a country that is multi-ethnic and multi-religious and as such it is expected that for peace to reign, the diversity should put into consideration in making appointments and distribution of resources. According to Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution as amended “the composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from few states or from a few ethnic or sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies”. The essence of this Constitutional provision is to ensure that no part of the country is marginalized in the conduct of government business in Nigeria. When this is done, there would be happiness and satisfaction by all and sundry and this would make them to maintain peace and unity as well as shun crime. The leadership must create a political, socio-economic, religious and cultural ambience of justice, egalitarianism and fairness.

Re-Orientation of Religious Education: There is need for urgent re-orientation of religious education. Hitherto, the dominant model of religious education in Nigeria has been faith-oriented and overwhelmed by religious indoctrination and dogma. Religious education is used to get people to embrace Christianity or Islam, rather than as a process or formation for religious tolerance and dialogue. Consequently, most children and youths are educated within this framework and are thus inclined to adopting a blind faith. This religious pedagogy gives little room for inter-faith understanding and harmony; hence religious intolerance is rife even among school children. There is, therefore, the need to reform the current curriculum on religious studies – which hitherto privileged the exclusive teaching of dogmatic Christian and Islamic doctrines – to a new praxis that would build in comparative religious studies, and expose students and pupils to basic principles of Christianity, Islam and traditional religion – religious harmony and moral instructions. All religious communities must understand that there is no alternative to inter-faith dialogue, as there can never be a universal religion or an exclusive society for adherents of a particular religion. Such an understanding will go a long way to curb crimes that are committed along religious lines.

Increasing the Moral Content of Religious Preaching: It is obvious that Nigerians are massively religious. In fact, there is hardly any Nigerian who does not pledge allegiance to one religion or the other. Given the religiosity of Nigerians one would have expected to be a relatively crime free society. However, and unfortunately, many religious preachers today dedicate more time to prosperity preaching to the detriment of the moral lives of members. Prosperity is not bad, but preachers must balance the message of prosperity with moral content which is the salt of every religion. Religious leaders should inculcate essential values which humanity in general consider as important to the enhancement of order, peace, progress, happiness, protection of the weak and the invalid, social cohesion and solidarity into their members. Religion can help to curb criminality when it patterns adherents' behavior in agreement with the societal norms and values which promotes societal stability. Religious organizations should be in the vanguard of discipline and morality. To foster a more amicable society they must do everything possible to instill in their members some sense of direction and responsibility. Religious organizations must be ever prepared to inculcate good morals such as being peaceable, honest, neighborly, etc in their adherents.

Security Consciousness: Nigerians should be advised to be more security conscious, share information with the police and other security agencies. The populace should not leave security matters to security personnel only. All should be involved in security information and data gathering. Moreover, efforts should be put in crime prevention than control.

The Role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): Civil society is a veritable organ for curbing crime and criminality in Nigeria. It is involved in broader peacebuilding processes in a number of capacities. In addition, it is a pillar of democratic systems and, as such, plays important roles in democracy and good governance for societies. Civil society contributes in a number of other areas of the society building agenda, including facets of economic and psycho-social recovery, justice and the rule of law, and security and public order. Finally, through its involvement across sectors, civil society serves a number of important functions that span different social themes and institutions. CSOs may serve as intermediaries between outsiders and local communities. In many cases, they operate as sub-contractors for internal and international agencies. Belloni avers that CSOs may provide complementary (or even alternative) governance structures where the state is weak, incapacitated, or indifferent to its people's needs. Here, their role is actually twofold. They often play a key role in delivering a certain number of public goods and basic social services, reaching the poorer sectors of the population, providing socio-economic opportunities, and enhancing the national capacity. They sometimes serve as actual substitutes for the state, filling a nearly total political vacuum. Such practices have often been denounced as part of a neo-liberal agenda to privatize the state, and as undermining sovereignty and allowing state responsibility to be skirted (7).

In addition, through monitoring and lobbying activities (in particular on issues such as human rights violations or corruption), civil society pushes the state to fulfill its obligations to its citizens and provides some of the necessary checks and balances on government excesses. As they sponsor activities that can build bridges across divided societies, CSOs participate in the effort to (re)build trust within and between communities, as well as to reestablish the state-society relationship and renegotiate a social contract (Carothers 3).

Civil society may also facilitate participatory local governance mechanisms. Further, civil society can provide a check on political power, pressing on behalf of citizenry for better governance. Here, they bolster elections, another pillar of democratic systems, by providing voter education and encouraging turnout and participation in related processes. While these are civil society's optimal functions and do not always reflect the possibilities or realities of each circumstance, they are representative of the valuable contribution civil society has the potential to play in regard to democracy and good governance.

Conclusion

It has become apparent that Nigeria as a nation is suffering enormous socio-economic woes as a result of crime and criminality. It is not out of place to state that criminality deters development. As a result of criminality, most foreign investors are scared away because of the hostile environment brought about by unabated criminal acts. Nigeria is faced with the challenges of insecurity as youths who have no place where they can be gainfully employed, make themselves readily available for recruitment to the local militia to commit various crimes. It has become necessary to seek a philosophical solution to this hydra-headed monster of crime and criminality. If the suggestions identified in the foregone are taken seriously, crime and criminality will be grossly reduced and Nigeria will become a better place.

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