

When work disappears, crime appears: a political economy analysis of urban crime in Edo State Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper is a theoretical construct which used data collected from the Edo State Police crime index from 2002 to 2011 to show crime trend in the state. The paper uses the Marxist perspective to argue that rapid urbanization and the depleting of the rural areas have elevated the level of crime from petty to a level of sophistication that the present institutional security agencies have failed to match. The rise in crime and crime rates in Edo state is located at the doorsteps of the deepening liberal and capitalist economic crises, unemployment and the emergence of a crop of educated and highly literate class of graduates which the economy is unable to absorb. The data shows that crime is not only on the increase but that the level is much higher than that in the rural or suburban areas. The paper interrogates other theoretical perspectives to explain this phenomenon and opined that although crime is not the exclusive preserve of capitalist society, its increase and sophistication can be located directly at the failure of the capitalist society to provide for the emerging class of educated but alienated and unemployed elite.

Key Words: Edo State, political economy, urban crime, Nigeria

Introduction

Generally, news of crime and criminal acts elicit different reactions from the people. Sometimes people are intrigued, attracted or repelled or amused or frightened. While interest in crime has usually been high, understanding why it occurs and what to do about it has always been a problem. As every other area of life and human behavior, there is no shortage of experts and experts' opinion starting from public officials, politicians, philosophers and the academes. The inability of the society and its agencies to prevent crime stems from our failure to understand criminal behavior and why there is crime in the first place. Certain things are constant in every society. These include crime, violence and conflict. The worsening crises of the economy have contributed a lot to the level and sophistication of crime in the world.

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Intensity of crime has also been deepening with crises in the economy such that level and sophistication of crime has also changed over time in terms of sophistication of weaponry and the level of intelligence employed especially in cyber crime related incidents. Prior to this time, crime has been limited to petty crime such as stealing, burglary, rape and other social vices. However withincrease in the level of unemployment and education, Nigeria has now witnessed high level of criminal activities. With the rise in the number of urban areas and the depletion of the rural areas, crime has also become intensified. Edo state is one of the rapidly urbanising states in Nigeria and this is due to oil related exploitation and the affluence this brings also. Ironically, attendant to this affluence is also a rise in the level of criminality experienced in the state which has moved from petty crime to highly sophisticated and intellectual crimes such as kidnapping, vandalisation of oil pipelines, daylight bank robberies with a high level of sophistication and armaments that surpassed even those of the police who are supposed to assured the society of its safety. State response to this development has not been encouraging even to the extent that it has been opined that the state has no answer to these crimes. The sophistication and intensity of crime appears to have overwhelmed state response and agencies ability to curb or control it. It would seem that while the criminals are developing with time in terms of sophistication of weapons and gallantry, the state institutions seem to have remained static and stagnant, often times bereft of ideas and innovation on how to combat crime. The reason for this is not farfetched and can be located in institutional decay, corruption and general malaise of governance that have affected both the society and security agencies which are part of the larger society. At the level of governance, there is an intellectual pit which has not been able to forge a link between the increasing level of crime and the deepening crisis of the state political economy. The crisis is also a reflection of

the state's inability to provide and also give an assurance of the provision of the basic necessity of food, shelter, clothing and security of life and property for the citizenry. The rest of this paper is structured into 5 sections; an introduction, a methodological section that attempts to explain what political economy is, another section that attempts to look at theories that linked political economy as a tool for analysis crime and deviance, a critical look of Edo state in the context of the Nigerian state, and a conclusion.

The Concept of Political Economy

Afanasyev et al (1974:46) have defined Political Economy as “the study of the system of social production and various development stages”. It is interesting to note that the use of Political Economy as a tool of analysis had never been the exclusive preserve of Marxist scholars although its current popularity as a tool of analysis of society and its development stages came when Marx adopted it from Liberal scholars. Its checkered history started from the period of petty commodity production and this has been traced to ancient China and Greece. Mang-Tse in China and Plato and Aristotle would be the first recognised political economists as they were the first to attempt to analyse the instability that accompanied petty commodity production and to find ways to overcome it on behalf of the communal society. Thereafter, it featured prominently during the period of the Mercantilist which also coincided with the period of Europe's expansionism, colonialism and imperialism, when discovery and conquest of new geographical areas led to new flows of capital to and from the New World of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The classical Liberal later adopted it as both an analytical and methodological tool. The prominent scholars of this period were Adam Smith who was the first to formulate a labour theory of value which reduces the value of commodities to the amount of labour contained in them and David Ricardo who argued for the accumulation of capital as the basis for economic expansion. Equally prominent was Thomas Malthus who contributed a

theory of population to political economy. He argued that population reproduces faster than food production and unless population growth was checked, the masses would face starvation and death. He, however, concluded that government should not aid the poor, for such action drains wealth and income from the higher echelons of society. As used by Marxists, Political Economy attempts to juxtapose development in all spheres especially the political with economics which form the basis and the spring board for development and social relations in a society. Put differently, political economy arises from the conviction that any social system has an economic base which is the aggregation of all the relations of production in that social system. It is the economic base which informs and determines all other social relations which jointly form the superstructure. Ilyin and Motylev (1986:37) have explained the superstructure as

consisting of “all political, legal, ethical, philosophical religious and other views and ideas and corresponding organizations and institutions (the state, political parties, judicial, cultural, religious and other institutions).” Political Economy singles out, specifically, the primacy of politics in the superstructure (that is, the political use of the state and its apparatus) and attempts to use it in conjunction with the economic base in analyzing the development of a state system. As Engels (1975:170) puts it, “Political Economy is therefore essentially a historical science. It deals with material which is historical, that is, constantly changing, it first investigate the special laws of each individual stage in the evolution of production and exchange.”

The classical Marxian conception of Political Economy differs greatly from the Liberal analysis. The Marxian conception takes its cue from the fact that economic relations are the basis of all social life and proceeds on to the analysis of the process of production, labour process and the social relations of people in relation to the production process. Marx and Engels have demonstrated quite convincingly that there are specific social

relations in every society which are directly linked with the production process. By this distillation of relations, the subject matter of Political Economy emerged.

The methodology of Political Economy is as Marx (1970:205) had stated; “When examining a given country from the standpoint of political economy, we begin with its population, the division of the population into classes, town and country, the sea, the different branches of production, export and import, annual production and consumption, prices etc.” The methodological use of Political Economy as a tool of analysis of African and non-industrialised social systems is a much recent phenomenon. For this, we have scholars such as A.G. Frank (1981), Arrighi and Saul (1973), S. Amin (1972, 1974), W. Rodney (1972), G. Williams (1976) and Claude Ake (1981) among others to thank.

Current Theories Linking Crime and Political Economy Conditions

The problematic this section is concerned with is to examine existing theoretical postulations that link and justify our intellectual stance and show that crime is actually a function of political and economic conditions of a society. This is necessary in the face of the poverty of other positivist and liberal theoretical assumptions and explanations of urban crime and criminology. Using Marxist or what has now been popularly refer to as Radical Criminology perspective (Bohm, 1993:148), we hope to show how economic and political conditions influence aggregate rates of crime. Although this appears to be particularly straightforward issue, years of research have failed to provide a satisfactory answer and a limited understanding of the relationship between macro-level economic and political structures and crime continues to characterize current criminology. Although this tendency is not peculiar to analysis of crime in Nigeria alone, nevertheless, this limitation is particularly problematic due to the increasing relevance of the structural changes that have reshaped Nigeria's post colonial

economy under the influence of corruption and globalisation and which has resulted in shifts in the composition of labour markets, as well as significant changes in the very nature of employment, a phenomenon that America has also experienced (Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Rubin 1995). Largely due to such shifts, the Nigerian state, at both national and local levels, have experienced changes that have had significant effects on crime and for which current theories seem to be inadequate to offer plausible explanation for or are ill equipped to explain. Although a growing number of scholars have documented these weaknesses (Greenberg 1993; Hagan 1994; LaFree 1999; Zahn 1999), the current body of research and theory has yet to sufficiently clarify the relationship between trends in rates of crime and changes in the political economy of cities.

Renewed interest in the structural causes of aggregate crime rates has spawned significant theoretical advances. Of prominence among these theoretical postulations are the Social Disorganization Theory, Strain Theory and Critical (or Radical) Criminology which have each expanded our understanding of the causal mechanisms behind variance in crime rates across nations, cities, and communities. Hence, research that can improve our understanding of the effects of economic and political conditions on crime rates remains both important and timely in the current context of rapid economic and political urban reorganization. In his 1991 American Society of Criminology presidential address, John Hagan (1992) decried the “poverty of a classless

criminology.” This is as a result of the fact that too little contemporary criminology actually attempts to put crime in context. In as much as crime is generally recognised as a social phenomenon that involves individuals, it is also important to acknowledge that it involves time, place and structure (Findlay 1999). This is not to say that understanding individual motivation and the psychological underpinnings of crime

is not essential to understanding crime (Agara, 1997); but it is instead to say that it should not be emphasized at the sacrifice of context (Taylor 1999).

Social disorganization explanations of crime draw heavily on the early works of Shaw and McKay (1942, 1969). According to them, community distress creates social disorganization, which they define as the disruption of primary relationships, the weakening of norms, and the erosion of shared culture (Kornhauser 1978). In sum, the contemporary social disorganization theory of crime contends that the loss of urban social structure has precipitated the decline of social control, thereby leading to increases in rates of crime. The social disorganization model defines communities as systems of interrelated networks (Kasarda and Janowitz 1975). The primary role of an urban community network is to maintain itself through the continued socialization of its members, including, but not limited to, the application of negative sanctions to deviant members. However, the maintenance of this system is usually undermined by social disorganization manifested at the community-level as weak social networks, limited participation in local organizations and little social control. As the antithesis of social disorganization, each aspect of social organization (networks, organizations, and control) forms the social fabric of a community (Kasarda and Janowitz 1975).

Classical strain theory, on the other hand, asserts that a culture establishes certain values that are equated with shared definitions of success (Merton 1938). Structural conditions, however, frequently block large segments of the population from reaching this shared definition of success. This limited access to culturally defined success therefore yields a division between aspirations and expectations; and this causes strain. Society therefore apply strain on individuals by its standard of success and most individuals with aspirations and expectations to achieve societal value of success but have their access blocked may resort to crime. In

this regard, strain is conceptualized as the difference between aspirations and actual achievements or to encompass the differences between expectations and actual achievements. According to Merton (1938) and other early strain theorists (Cloward and Ohlin 1961; Cohen 1955), two responses to strain may lead to criminal involvement. Individuals may respond to strain by utilizing illegitimate means to achieve legitimate goals or they may respond to strain by replacing legitimate goals with new goals and new means of achieving them (both of which are often illegitimate).

In attempting to re-modify the traditional strain theory, Agnew (1992; 1999) proposed a General Strain Theory in which he identifies three mechanisms that lead to strain. First, strain can be the result of the failure to achieve goals. Similar to traditional strain theory, general strain theory asserts that this form of strain occurs when a society or community places great emphasis on certain goals for which the means of achieving are structurally limited. Expanding on traditional strain theory, Agnew (1992) argues that blocked access to goals encompasses three types of strain inducing divisions. This indicates an important difference between aspirations, that may be unrealistic, and actual expectations based on evaluations of the achievements of common referents (Agnew 1992). Strain can also take the form of the difference between equitable outcomes and actual achievements. Drawing on social justice literature, Agnew (1992) further argue that strain is the result of an infringement on a sense of equity. It is not that the individual doesn't get what they want or what they think they deserve, but that they do not get out of an interaction what they put into it. Strain results when the individual does not receive equitable rewards, especially relative to others.

Second, strain, according to Agnew (1992), may result from the loss of positive stimuli. At the individual level the loss of positive stimuli could take the form of the loss of a parent or adult mentor (Brezina 1996). Agnew (1992) differentiates between blocked access to

goals (especially when goals have never been experienced directly) and the actual loss of positively valued stimuli. Strain results from the loss of something of value as the individual attempts to prevent the loss, substitute the lost stimuli for another stimuli, or seek retribution for the loss. Third, strain can be the result of the presence of aversive stimuli. At the individual level, aversive stimuli could be anything from criminal victimization to child abuse (Brezina 1996). Strain results from the attempt to avoid

noxious stimuli, end those stimuli, or again, retaliate against the source of those stimuli (Agnew 1992; Brezina 1996).

Of importance and relevance to our intellectual standpoint is the contemporary critical (radical) criminology which emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s (Reid, 2003, Bohm 1993). Bohm (1993: 148-163) has attempted to differentiate between radical criminology and its antecedent conflict criminology (Greenberg 1993). Although conflict criminology challenged the then dominant liberal perspectives on crime in terms of the definition of crime, the role of power and the relationship between crime and the state, radical criminology is more specific in its identification of the explanatory variables that account for crime. According to Keller (1976:283), the radical school is very specific about the political economy of capitalism as the criminogenic factor. Of all the theories, "only the critical (radical) school specifies the political and economic structures that promote conflict and therefore produce crime." Whereas social disorganization theory and general strain theory take urban social problems as a given, critical criminology explores their root causes in capitalism. From the critical perspective, crime is a latent outcome of capitalist crises of production and consumption (Colvin and Pauly 1983; Lynch, Groves and Lizotte 1994; Taylor 1999). Hence, changes in the structure of capitalism will necessarily yield changes in the scope and form of crime. The neo-Marxist approach argues that escalating crime is the result of capitalist crisis based on the contradiction between production and consumption. From this perspective,

economic distress actually taps business cycles, thus economic contraction may increase crime rates (Wallace and Humphries 1993; Wright 1981). If structural conditions create crime, then crime cannot be eliminated without first eliminating the causal structural conditions. The nature and extent of crime, therefore, will not change without a radical restructuring of contemporary capitalism.

Scholars and policymakers have ignored the influence of general and contextual factors behind the scale and distribution of traditional crime and violence rates in large metropolitan areas. Crime and violence result from and contribute to the development (or lack of development) of a metropolitan region. Explaining crime rates as compared to the incidence of crime across individuals requires structural frameworks that account for both the development of a metropolis and its crime and violence problems. Motivations for crime vary across society in terms of their intensity and content. Status considerations are important for many different types of behaviours and actions as they are for crime. Achieving and maximizing status requires resources. The generation and distribution of resources result from the organization of important social, economic, and political structures and the differential positioning and access of individuals and groups in these structures (Marwah, 2006).

Several years ago, crime and criminal behavior were thought to have been the result of influence of evil spirits and demons. However, in the face of development, spiritual determinism gave way to the classical school of criminology as developed through the works of Jeremy Bentham and Cesare Beccaria. They argued that human beings are rational creatures with free-will and pursue happiness and pleasure but avoids unhappiness and pain. Bentham and Beccaria were noted for their insistence that punishment should be such that it is sufficient enough to deter criminal behavior. The neoclassical school did not represent any intellectual break from the classical school other than to challenge

the notion of absolute free-will (Vold, 1958). Their position is that the exercise of free-will can be diminished by pathology, incompetence, mental disorder or other conditions that may mitigate personal responsibility. The positivist school as elaborated in the works of B.F. Skinner, Cesare Lombroso and later Enrico Ferri and Raffaele Garofalo insists on empirical evidence and what is observable as the primary sources of the most valid knowledge.

All theories of crime have certain underlying assumptions about human nature. This perspective has been enlarged by Robert Merton's Strain theory which posits that human beings are fundamentally conforming beings who are strongly influenced by the values and attitudes of the society in which they live. The attitude and values of the postcolonial capitalist states like Nigeria revolved around accumulation of wealth and status. The strain theorists therefore argued that since humans are fundamentally conforming, they will readily comply with this value constellation. However, since access to and means of accumulating wealth are not easily available to everyone, then crime and delinquency will occur as a result of the "perceived discrepancy between the materialistic values and goals cherished and held in high esteem by a society and the availability of the legitimate

means for reaching these goals. Under these conditions, a strain between the goals of wealth and power and the means of reaching them develops. Groups and individuals experiencing a high level of this strain are forced to decide whether to violate norms and laws to attain some of this sought-after wealth or power or give up the dream and go through the motions withdraw or rebel (Bartol, 1995:13).

The second perspective assumes that human beings are nonconformists and undisciplined creatures, who without restraints imposed by rules and regulations, would flout society's conventions and commit crime indiscriminately. This perspective tallies with the social control theory which contends that "crime and delinquency occurs when an individual's ties to the

conventional order or normative standards are weak or largely nonexistent. This position [therefore] perceives human nature as 'bad' or 'antisocial', an innate tendency that must be controlled by society. In this sense, social control theory subscribes to Darwinism (Bartol, 1995:13). The third perceptive sees human beings as neutral, neither conforming nor nonconforming, learning all their behavior, beliefs and tendencies from their social environment. Thus, criminal behavior is a learned habit through social interaction with other people. It is not the result of any emotional disorder, mental illness or innate quality of good or bad. This leads us to attempting to define crime and criminal behavior. Crime has been defined as "an intentional act in violation of the criminal law committed without defense or excuse and penalized by the state as a felony or misdemeanor" (Tappan, 1947:100). Given this, criminal behavior will then be "an intentional behavior that violates a criminal code" (Bartol 1995:17) by intentional it implies that such a behavior did not occur accidentally or under duress. So to be held criminally liable, a person must have known that such an act is wrong.

Crime has become one of the most visible areas of public concern in recent years in Nigeria. Yet, there is a poverty of statistics and quantitative data dealing with crime rates across the country and especially in cities and urban centers prominently known for crime, although these rates may vary tremendously across Nigerian cities. A number of works especially by western scholars have examined city-level variation in crime rates (Lee 2000, and Parker 2004). These studies have variously emphasized a number of social and economic factors such as poverty, family disruption, ethnic heterogeneity and urbanization as responsible for the variations.

Scholars have also suggested the variations in crime rates may be due to levels and extent of urbanization of each city. Sampson and Groves (1989) have suggested that cities with larger populations may have a decreased

capacity for informal social control and hence higher crime rates. Urbanization is therefore thought to weaken local friendship ties, increase anonymity, and impede participation in local affairs, forcing larger cities to rely more heavily on formal social control mechanisms of the state (Liska et al., 1998; Messner and Golden, 1992; Shihadeh and Steffensmeier, 1994). In this respect, some studies have consistently showed that as population increases crime increases (Land et al., 1990, Nolan 2004). Thus, the weight of these studies suggests that urbanization and crime are positively related.

Edo State in the Context of the Nigerian State

Edo state which is our focal unit for this paper is located in the South-south of Nigeria. The 1991 census figures showed the state as having a population of 2,159,848 made up of 1,082,718 male and 1,077,130 female. By the 2006 census, the figures have risen to a total population of 3,218,332 made up of 1,640,461 male and 1,577,871 female, figures that showed that the state is one of the fastest growing states in Nigeria in terms of population growth and urbanization. Among other fast growing urban centers in the south of Nigeria such as Lagos, Port Harcourt, Ibadan, Aba and Enugu, Edo state (Benin) has come to be recognized as peculiar when it comes to crime and notable criminal figures. Very notable of these criminal kingpins was Anini in the former Bendel state from which the present Edo state was created in 1991. It is possible to see the Anini saga as an Edo state phenomenon because his ambit of operation was actually Benin and its environs. Until his capture in December 3, 1986 and eventual execution, he terrorized the state for some years. Also notable was the case of Sunday Osunbor and perhaps of more interest would be the case of Police Superintendent George Iyamu who not only founded an armed robbery gang but rented out police guns and ammunitions to robbery gangs in Benin for specified fees.

Although urban armed robbery gangs now exist all over, the character of

crime in Edo state has metamorphosed from such to various other crimes such as murder, assassinations, ritual killings, cultism related killings, burglary, arson, kidnapping, human trafficking, hooliganism and others. While the crime wave is not peculiar to Edo State alone, however, the wave seems to be more predominant among the Niger Delta cities of Warri, Aba, Benin and Port Harcourt with little to report in terms of prevalence in Calabar, Akure and other states within the Niger Delta axis. This may be due to the level of affluence suddenly exhibited by people in these areas as a result of engagement in oil exploration and exploitation and the influx of foreigners and Nigerians who are engaged by the oil companies. The wealth which involvement in oil exploitation has brought has suddenly led to the emergence of a class of lumpen bourgeoisie who has no qualms in showing off their wealth while the majority of the people have to make do

with wallowing in abject poverty due to scarcity of employment. Crime therefore becomes the only available means to partake of the wealth derived from oil exploitation and the growing unemployable youths who had fled to the urban centers for employment but cannot get one because they either do not have the requisite qualifications and experience or do not have access to the political machinery and middle men who had cornered the lucrative jobs of assisting people for a price.

Deriving from the crime statistics figure by the Edo State Police Command for 2002-2011 as shown on Table 1, the figures for crime against persons are more than the figures for crime against property and others. For instance, while the total crime figures for the 9 years under review is 20836 for crime against persons, for against property; the figure is 18557 while the figure for other types of crime recorded is 2546.

Table 1

Types Of Offences (Jan-Dec)

S/n	Year	Against persons	Against property	Against local acts	Others	Total
1.	2002	3414	3321	151	464	7350
2.	2003	4090	2867	NIL	270	7227
3.	2004	3197	2344	NIL	313	5854
4.	2005	2907	2418	NIL	337	5662
5.	2006	2632	2615	NIL	496	5743
6.	2007	1569	1781	NIL	265	3615
7.	2008	1135	1348	NIL	155	2638
8.	2009	1140	1108	NIL	156	2404
9.	2011	752	755	NIL	90	1567
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>20836</u>	<u>18557</u>	<u>151</u>	<u>2546</u>	<u>42060</u>

Source: Yearly crime statistics returns for Edo State

What specific crime or criminal acts in the Police lexicon or categorization constitutes crime against persons, property, local acts and others? Table 2 below gives the breakdown of crime against persons for the year 2002-2011. During this period, it is very instructive to note that assault accounted for the majority of offences committed (11741),

followed by grievous harm and wounding (4871), while rape and indecent assault followed a distant 3rd with 858 reported cases. Of all the years reported, the crime rate seem to be higher in 2003 (4090 cases) followed by 2002 (3410 cases) and 2004 (3191 cases).

Table 2*Offences against Person (Jan-Dec)*

S/ N	Types	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
1.	Murder	62	64	73	86	85	68	57	62	21	75	653
2.	Manslaughter	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	14	-	-	17
3.	Attempted murder	17	13	17	8	26	25	17	13	6	9	151
4.	Suicide	16	10	13	6	15	14	8	1	-	8	91
5.	Grievous harm/wounding	574	862	704	676	720	452	350	291	74	168	4871
6.	Assault	1817	2279	1817	1931	1630	881	574	422	121	269	11741
7.	Child stealing	14	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16
8.	Slave Dealing	5	1	-	-	-	-	81	87	-	-	174
9.	Rape and indecent assault	158	164	94	90	134	114	3	105	28	58	948
10.	Kidnapping	27	35	23	14	22	15	-	105	16	97	333
11.	Unnatural offences	48	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	56
12.	Other	670	651	450	96	-	-	50	145	121	68	2251
	Total	3410	4090	3191	2907	2632	1569	1140	1245	387	752	21323

Source: Yearly crime statistics returns for Edo state

Table 3 below specifies the crime categorized as against property. Theft and stealing seemed prevalent accounting for 10172 cases followed by false pretence and cheating (popularly known as 419) with 2498 cases and house breaking accounting for 1221 cases. A cursory look at the total figures for the years show a declining trend in the total numbers of crime against property per year.

Table 3*Offences against Property (Jan-Dec)*

S/N	Types	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
1.	Armed robbery	105	137	147	159	163	79	71	100	22	89	1072
2.	Demanding with menace	9	1	-	-	-	-	5	9	1	6	31
3.	Theft & other stealing	1410	1618	1337	1543	1513	1061	760	430	215	285	10172
4.	Burglary	309	161	146	182	188	112	102	97	40	71	1408
5.	House breaking	373	155	136	116	136	85	59	71	28	62	1221
6.	Store breaking	273	119	91	74	58	69	42	68	19	44	857

7.	False pretence & cheating	249	290	350	255	425	287	240	195	74	133	2498
8.	Forgery	16	7	3	16	21	9	4	8	-	4	88
9.	Receiving stolen property	9	15	14	13	21	6	8	7	-	8	101
10.	Unlawful possession	100	117	106	47	84	58	19	20	-	17	568
11.	Arson	25	34	14	11	6	15	6	9	1	12	133
12.	Others	443	213	-	2	-	-	52	94	66	34	904
	Total	3321	2867	2344	2418	2615	1781	1363	1108	466	765	19053

Source: Yearly crime statistics returns for Edo state

Of what qualifies as other offences, it is interesting to note that breach to public peace (hooliganism, spontaneous mob-like actions by motor touts or street urchins popularly called ‘area boys’ to extort money or create confusion in order to rob and disperse immediately thereafter) has the highest figure of 2366 cases. Of all the years in review, 2006 has the highest number of reported cases of breach of public peace (379) and also the highest figure of all the years (496).

Table 4

Other Offences (Jan-Dec)

S/n	Types	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
1.	Forgery of currency notes	Nil		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.	Gambling	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
3.	Threat to life	-	-	-	4	69	64	-	-	-	-	137
4.	Malicious damage	-	-	-	-	43	43	-	-	-	-	86
5.	Abduction	-	-	-	-	1	3	-	-	-	-	4
6.	Breach of public peace	343	258	312	327	379	137	155	156	74	90	2366
7.	Affray	-	-	-	-	2	12	-	-	-	-	14
8.	Human trafficking	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
9.	Escape from lawful custody	16	9	1	3	1	3	-	-	-	-	33
10.	Defilement	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	3
11.	Bribery & corruption	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
12.	Others	80	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	80
	Total	449	269	313	337	496	264	155	156	74	90	2738

Source: Yearly crime statistics returns for Edo state

impact on social, political and intellectual activity of the society. It is within these contradictions of capitalism that urban crimes and deviance emerge.

In class societies as engendered by capitalism, the hegemony of the ruling class is preserved by the superstructure through a system of class control institutionalized in the family, religious centers, private associations, media, schools and the state. Thus, the existence of crime and criminal behavior actually threatens and brings to question the social relations of production in capitalist societies. As Spitzer (1993:143) has pointed out, urban crime not only points out to the inadequacies of the existing social relations in the society but also questions any of the following;

1. Capitalist modes of appropriating the product of human labour (e.g. when the poor steal from the rich)
2. The social conditions under which capitalist production takes place (e.g. those who refuse or are unable to perform wage labour because they couldn't get one in the first place)
3. Patterns of distribution and consumption in capitalist society (e.g. those who use drugs for escape and transcendence rather than sociability and adjustment)
4. The process of socialization for productive and nonproductive roles (e.g. youth who refuse to be schooled and those who deny the validity of family life) and
5. The ideology which supports the functioning of capitalist society (e.g. proponents of alternative forms of social organisation).

Although the data we use above do not include those who fall under categories 3&5 above, they nevertheless constitute part of what Spitzer (1993) has termed "problem population" and are prevalent in the urban settings. The data in table 5 supports the fact that crime rates are high in all urban centers

primarily because they act as the melting pot or the meeting point of all elements of the problem population who have congealed in the urban centers for

Table 5

Urban and Sub-Urban Crime Rates for Edo State (2005)

S/N	Urban Areas	Crime Rates	Sub-Urban Areas	Crime Rates
1.	Ekiadolor, Benin	18	Abudu	8
2.	Airport Road, Benin	7	Igubeben	17
3.	Oba Market, Benin	26	Afuze	24
4.	Ehor, Benin	18	Agenebode	4
5.	Uromi, Benin	70	Iguobazuwa	9
6.	New Benin	132	Fugar	5
7.	Ugbekun, Benin	123	Akoko Edo	8
	Total	394	Total	75

Source: Yearly crime statistics returns for Edo state

The criminal is usually perceived by the others as a social deviant and hence deviance refers to a breach of social order. However, as a member of a society, the criminal must be seen and understood within the context of his relationship to specific forms of socioeconomic organizations. This becomes more pertinent especially in a capitalist society which is ultimately defined by "the process that transforms on one hand, the social means of subsistence and of production into capital, on the other hand the immediate producers into wage labourers" (Marx, 1967:714). The post-colonial state of Nigeria is experiencing a rapid rate of urbanization with all its attendant social, political and economic problems. The post-colonial state is purely and essentially a capitalist state and there are two features of the capitalist state that are essential for an understanding of urban crime. The first is that capitalism as a mode of production forms the foundation or infrastructure of every society. The implication of this is that any analysis and understanding of urban crime must be derive from the understanding of the economic organization of capitalist societies and the impact it has on all aspects of social life. Secondly is that capitalism contains certain inherent contradictions which

opportunities to share in or have a part in the wealth of the society. Of the crime against property, it is not difficult to comprehend why theft and stealing is high (10172) and the figure becomes higher still when added to burglary (1408), house (1221) and store breaking (851) which are generic to stealing and thereby giving the reported number of cases as 13658.

A subclass that is included among the second category of problem population will be those who having had the requisite education are unable to get meaningful employment because the capitalist class and its elites have turn it into rent-seeking and means of securing gratification from the populace. This particular educated and schooled class has congregated naturally in urban centers in the hope of securing jobs and denial or non availability of this has led many into crimes. Among the crime they are notable for are armed robbery, kidnapping and false pretence (419). However, because of the threat of possible reprisals and loss of life, threats against the victims, many of these peculiar cases go unreported partly due also to the inability of the police to do anything about them. However, our data shows that a total number of 333 cases of kidnapping were reported and this peaked in 2005 with 105 reported cases. In terms of '419' cases, 2498 cases were reported and armed robbery claimed a total of 1072 cases with many occurring on the highways going unreported.

Although marginal employment and chronic joblessness may be more illustrative of current trends in urban labour markets (Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Moore and Larramore 1990; Rubin 1995; Wilson 1996; Wilson, Tienda and Wu 1995), however, changes in urban employment may result in a greater need for informal, and possibly illegitimate, sources of income (Allan and Steffensmeier 1989; Freeman 1997; Skinner 1995; Tilly 1991, 1992; Wilson 1996). So these unemployed urban population is actually symptomatic of a problem population created in two ways; "either directly through the expression of fundamental contradictions in the capitalist mode of production or indirectly

through disturbances in the system of class rule" (Spitzer, 1993:143). Marx's (1967:631) analysis of the "relative surplus population" is of great relevance here because the emergence of this surplus population but educated class has led to the emergence of a class of economically redundant population that is ever increasing every year given the number of tertiary institutions that are in the country. Insofar as the conditions of economic existence determine social existence, this group therefore posits a class that is both threatening and vulnerable at the same time. The paradox here is that this certain but increasing population is both useful and menacing to the accumulation of capital. This particular class which belongs to the educated elites of the society and a necessary product of and condition for the accumulation of wealth on a capitalist basis, also creates a form of social expense which must be neutralized or controlled if production relations and conditions for increased accumulation by the bourgeois capitalist element in the society are to remain undisturbed.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we seek to reiterate the fact that crime is not exclusive to capitalist societies only, but societies where the few controls and appropriates the resources of the society to the exclusion of the many can only breed anger, resentment and crime. The capitalist society is well noted for alienating its own people by denying them access to basic human needs. Marx has identified four main characteristics of alienation: man's alienation from nature, from himself, from his specie being and from other men. This alienation has therefore made available a ready 'battalion, troops and foot soldiers' who are ready for anything and anywhere and to whom crime has become a way of life, sustenance and existence. The major concentration of these boys is in the urban centers such as Lagos and Warri (where they are called 'area boys'), Port Harcourt (where they are called 'ofio boys'), Ile- Ife (where they are referred to as 'omo-ita'), Calabar (where they are

popularly known as 'agaba boys') and in Kano (where they are called 'yandaba'). Amuta (2000:12) has also rightly observed that; The existence of vast reservoirs of unemployed miscreant youth has led to the unconscious recognition of an underground republic in the country. It is called the republic of hoodlums, a reservoir of almost limitless supply of hungry, angry, willing and able fighters for murky causes. It is from this army that the various ethnic militias are drawing their cadres. Given this scenario, what to do becomes of great importance. The effectiveness of any law as a social inhibitor of corruption rests on the effectiveness of its monitoring, the swiftness and harshness of the punishment. Despite Barnes (1930:6) submission that "history shows that severe punishments have never reduced criminality to a marked degree" the Nigerian experience under Murtala and Buhari belie this proposition. However, two philosophical views are diametrically opposed in their perceptions of punishment. The first is the Retributivists perspective which holds that "punishment is in itself a reward, compensation or a kind of annulment, for a crime. "Punishment...restores the balance that a crime has upset" (Oruka, 1976:4). Punishment from the retributivist's perspective is therefore seen as an end in itself and therefore posits the only ethically possible justification of punishment. On the other hand, the Utilitarians view punishment as "in itself undesirable and ought never to be inflicted for its own sake or just because a crime has been committed. Only if punishment promises to exclude some greater evil ought it to be recommended" (Oruka, 1976:5). Punishment for the utilitarians is a means to an end. Jeremy Bentham, the acclaimed founder of Utilitarianism, has also stated that "punishment is mischief: all punishment itself is evil...if it ought to be admitted, it ought only to be admitted in as far as it promises to exclude some greater evil" (Bentham, 1968:170).

Implicit in the philosophical consideration or justification of punishment are the twin issues of morality

and free will and the intentionality. The issue of free will or freedom of the will in philosophical discourses is rather vague, an ambiguous metaphysical notion. The issue assumed a prominence mainly because in conventional law and morality, responsibility is defined in terms of free will and punishment or blame is justified solely on this basis. Immanuel Kant, the famous German Philosopher, has argued, rather erroneously, that morality would be impossible if free will or freedom of the will were non-existent. We believe that what would have been impossible without free will is blame and punishment not morality because most law recognizes that a person may not be criminally responsible for an act which occurs independently of the exercise of his will or which he did under duress. Thus, a person, as Oruka (1976:11) bluntly puts it, "is criminally responsible for a crime if in committing or allowing the crime, his action was intentional and avoidable". The notion of intentionality is of two fold. First is the intention of the authorities inflicting the punishment and the intention which the punishment is expected to serve. The intention of the authorities inflicting the punishment has nothing to do here mainly because it is assumed that it is the law that punishes only through its agents. Thus, the law does not concern itself with the intention or the psychological motives of its agents. What the law concerns itself about is upholding justice.

Punishment is expected to serve a number of purposes or functions the primary of which is to maintain or maximize social security. However, basically four broad functions which punishment is expected to serve are discernible. These are (i) just retribution; the possibility and fear of retributive punishment do, to some extent; restrain some potential criminals from committing criminal acts. (ii) Reformation which aims at reforming or changing the character of the criminal element. The primary reason for this is to transform the criminal person into a decent person while at the same time, ensure that others are free from the evils which his criminality may inflict on them. (iii)

Deterrence which is aim at preventing others and those being punished from committing crimes. Hart (1968:27) has argued that “society is divisible at any moment into two classes, (i) those who have actually broken a given law, and (ii) those who have not yet broken it, but may. To make reform as the dominant objective would be to forego the hope of influencing the second”. Deterrence can then be seen to be of two kinds; general and individual. General deterrence is achieved when punishment is executed in such a way that it scares others from performing such or other criminal acts. Individual deterrence is the deterrence of individual from further perpetuating criminal acts due to having served some form of punishment for former acts. (iv) Compensation where punishment is seen as compensating the offender for his anti-social acts and where, in some cases, he is further ask to pay or return what may have been loss back to the wronged individual. In traditional African system, punishment is fashioned mainly to achieve compensation and retribution, as Clinard and Abbot (1973:269) have suggested after their case study of crimes in Uganda;

Restitution to the victim or compensation to the victim has particular merit as a substitute for both fine and imprisonment in less developed countries. This was the traditional method of settling offences in most countries and it still remains so in the rural areas, particularly in African societies.

No matter how much or hard criminals are punished in order to deter them or others, unlike the underlying contradictory relations of the capitalist society is solved, crime seems to be a permanent feature of the horizon.

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