THE EMERGENCE OF AMOTEKUN: ANALYZING UNDERLYING FACTORS AND MOTIVATIONS

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Abstract

The study aims to examine the underlying factors and motivations that led to the establishment of Amotekun, a community-based security network in southwestern Nigeria. It seeks to determine whether its creation was primarily a response to escalating insecurity or a manifestation of Yoruba socio-political aspirations for regional autonomy.

The research adopts a qualitative and exploratory design anchored in Situational Crime Prevention Theory. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 31 Amotekun members in Ondo State, selected using convenience and venue-based sampling. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the transcribed data and identify recurrent themes.

Results indicate that Amotekun emerged as a reaction to the inefficacy of Nigeria's centralized security system, addressing crimes such as kidnapping, robbery, and farmer–herder conflicts. However, evidence also suggests ethnic exclusivity and potential alignment with the Yoruba socio-political movement (Afenifere), implying dual objectives—security provision and regional identity promotion.

The study validates the applicability of Situational Crime Prevention Theory in explaining informal security initiatives, showing how localized interventions can alter crime opportunities within community contexts.

The findings underscore the need for clearer legal frameworks defining Amotekun's jurisdiction and coordination with federal agencies to prevent jurisdictional conflicts.

This research provides rare empirical insights into Amotekun's formation, linking security governance with regional political dynamics and contributing to the broader discourse on community policing in emerging democracies.

Key words: Amotekun, Nigeria, security, community policing, regional autonomy.

Introduction

Nigeria is currently facing a more complex and multidimensional security crisis than at any other time in its history (International Crisis Group, 2020). All six geopolitical zones and the thirty-six states, including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, are afflicted by a range of security threats—spanning insurgency, armed banditry, militia violence, inter-ethnic conflicts, kidnapping, illegal mining, mineral theft, and cyberattacks, among others (Akinterinwa, 2021). The escalation of these problems, particularly in recent years, coupled with the ineffectual responses of Nigerian law enforcement agencies, suggests that the country faces significant challenges in maintaining national security and public safety.

Specifically, the inability of security agencies to repel attacks, together with the widespread belief that individuals must take responsibility for their own safety rather than rely on the police, indicates that the current level of insecurity has overwhelmed existing law enforcement institutions (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2021). Furthermore, the police's failure to balance loyalty to the state with accountability to citizens has deepened public mistrust. This mistrust deprives officers of vital

intelligence required for effective operations, thereby undermining their capacity to investigate and contain rising insecurity (Ojiezele, 2023).

The persistent and escalating insecurity in the country has become a critical issue, severely impacting Nigeria's social, economic, and political stability across all regions (Alemika, 2018). Consequently, the pervasive sense of insecurity among citizens has driven the search for alternative security mechanisms (Adebanjo & Fagbadebo, 2020). Many local communities have turned to informal or non-state security groups—such as vigilante organizations, hunters' associations, youth neighborhood watches, and civilian task forces—to police their communities and protect lives and property. These groups often collaborate with formal security agencies, providing intelligence and helping to identify criminal hideouts (Akinwale, 2019).

Empirical evidence indicates that local security forces have recently gained formal recognition from several state governments, particularly in the north-west, south-south, and south-west regions of Nigeria (Odeyinka, 2021). For example, states in the north-west have provided financial support to informal security groups, consolidating them under a single framework—the *Hisbah* corps—to operate as state-backed neighborhood watch organizations (Odeyinka, 2021). Similarly, the south-western states established a regional security outfit known as *Amotekun* to complement the police and other law enforcement agencies (Olaniyi, 2020). These governments went further by enacting regional laws to institutionalize the force, regulate its operations, and authorize the use of firearms. Comparable initiatives have emerged in the south-south region (Abioye, 2021).

Despite state-level support, these forces remain informal under Nigerian law, as the constitution vests the exclusive authority to establish, control, and maintain security agencies in the federal government.

The establishment of *Amotekun* has become a focal point in Nigeria's discourse on regional security. Like other informal networks, it represents a significant shift toward community-based policing tailored to the unique sociocultural and geographic realities of the south-west (Aborisade, 2021). *Amotekun* has been recognized for its proactive role in addressing local security concerns, including the arrest of armed groups, rescue of kidnapped victims, prevention of community attacks, and mediation in inter-ethnic conflicts (Abioye, 2021). Nevertheless, its emergence has sparked debate about the underlying motivations and broader implications for Nigeria's security architecture.

Proponents argue that the south-west, known for its robust agricultural and commercial activities, has become a target for organized crime and terrorism. Thus, *Amotekun* was established not only to address insecurity but also to protect economic stability and livelihoods disrupted by violence (Adebanjo & Fagbadebo, 2020; Olaniyi, 2020). Critics, however, contend that *Amotekun* was motivated by regionalist ambitions, serving as a vehicle for promoting southern sociopolitical autonomy and potentially undermining national unity (Odeyemi, 2014). Other analysts emphasize that the organization's Yoruba cultural symbolism reinforces regional identity and solidarity, legitimizing calls for greater political self-determination (Odeyemi, 2014).

The creation of *Amotekun* highlights the complex dynamics between federal and state authorities in Nigeria. Initially, the federal government opposed the initiative, perceiving it as a potential threat to national cohesion and sovereignty (Adebayo, 2020). However, subsequent legal endorsement through state legislation marked a negotiated compromise, reflecting an evolving assertion of subnational autonomy within Nigeria's federal system.

To date, scholarly investigations on this topic remain limited. Existing literature primarily examines the operational effectiveness of informal security networks and their role in complementing state agencies. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by exploring the socio-political and security factors underlying the establishment of *Amotekun* as a non-state security network in south-western Nigeria. Understanding these factors is essential for assessing the origins

and sustainability of community-based security initiatives, their implications for governance, and their potential to address localized insecurity. In doing so, this study contributes to broader debates on hybrid security governance and offers comparative insights relevant to other regions grappling with similar security challenges.

Literature Review

Yoruba Socio-Political Movement

Nigeria comprises approximately 270 ethnic groups that were amalgamated into a British colonial state and gained independence in 1963. Each of these groups possesses distinct cultural and political ideologies, unique historical consciousness, and differing cultural identities and levels of awareness (Yagboyaju, 2017). In addition, many ethnic groups are further differentiated by their ecological environments, which shape their traditional subsistence economies, even though some maintain interdependent relationships (Ikechukwu, 2015). These ecological variations range from coastal and marshy regions to areas rich in crude oil resources—resources that served as Nigeria's principal source of state revenue from the early 1970s until 2009 (Yagboyaju, 2017).

Nigeria's political history identifies three dominant ethnic groups—the Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa/Fulani—as hegemonic forces within the country's colonial and postcolonial structure in terms of population size, political influence, and geographic distribution (Ekeh, 2000). Each of these groups had established its own form of hegemonic authority prior to colonialism, and none was prepared to relinquish this power for the sake of national unity. This tension was evident in the struggle for ethnic and regional dominance following independence. Many groups continued to uphold competing visions of political supremacy, thereby heightening fears of interethnic domination (Odeyemi, 2014).

Competition for economic resources and political influence subsequently intensified, making ethnic differentiation more complex. As a result, ethnic nationalism and politics became instruments for accessing both financial and political power. Nationalism and ethnic politics manifested in various forms, most notably through political mobilization and, at times, violent conflict (Odeyemi, 2014). For instance, at independence, Nigeria was constituted as a federal republic but transitioned to a unitary government in 1966. However, the rise of ethnonationalist movements led to the reintroduction of federalism in 1967—a system that remains in place today, consisting of 36 federating states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, organized into six geopolitical zones: South-West, South-South, South-East, North-West, North-East, and North-Central. These states are further divided into 774 local government areas (Odeyemi, 2014).

Although these administrative divisions were intended to promote equitable distribution of power and resources, certain ethnic groups continue to feel marginalized and underrepresented. Consequently, recurring agitations for regional autonomy and ethnic self-determination persist across the federation (Alliyu et al., 2016). Among the most vocal groups in this regard are the Yoruba, Ijaw, and other ethnic communities in the Niger Delta region.

The Yoruba people, in particular, have established several socio-political movements to advance their collective interests. These organizations aim to address political, social, and cultural issues affecting the Yoruba population, advocating for their rights, cultural preservation, and socio-economic development (Olayode, 2011). Notable among these is *Afenifere*, a leading Yoruba socio-cultural and political organization promoting federalism and regional autonomy within Nigeria. Other groups such as the *Yoruba World Congress*, the *Oodua People's Congress (OPC)*, and various youth-based movements have also played significant roles in advancing Yoruba political and cultural interests (Olayode, 2011).

The Emergence of Amotekun as an Informal Security Structure in Nigeria

Informal security refers to security arrangements that function outside the formal state institutions such as the police, military, or other official security agencies (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2009). These are community-driven mechanisms, established to safeguard individuals and property where formal institutions are either absent, weak, or ineffective (Baker, 2008). Informal security initiatives include neighborhood watch groups, private security firms, vigilante groups, and other community-based organizations (Hills, 2000).

According to Ogbozor (2016), informal security structures in Nigeria assume various names—*vigilantes*, *private security guards*, *neighborhood watch*, *community guards*, *Ebubegun* in the southeast, *Amotekun* in the southwest, and *Yan Banga* or *Olodes* (hunters) in traditional societies. Alemika and Chukwuma (2002) identify key characteristics of such structures as:

1. **Localization** – They operate within specific communities or neighborhoods to address local security concerns.
2. **Responsiveness** – They are typically more responsive to immediate threats than formal security agencies.
3. **Flexibility** – They can rapidly adapt to evolving security dynamics.
4. **Diversity** – They assume multiple forms, including community patrols, private guards, and neighborhood intelligence networks.

Their primary functions include:

- Providing protection and a sense of safety for local residents.
- Acting as a deterrent to crime through increased community surveillance.
- Gathering intelligence to support formal security operations.
- Complementing formal security agencies in contexts where the latter are overstretched or under-resourced (Baker, 2004).

The origins of informal security networks in Nigeria date back to the colonial era, when local defense groups were mobilized alongside colonial police forces to maintain order and suppress uprisings (Basiru & Osunkoya, 2019). However, abuses such as extortion and arbitrary detention soon emerged, leading to their disbandment or marginalization. Despite this, local security groups continued to play vital roles in rural areas until the military coup of 1966 (Ojiezele, 2022).

In contemporary Nigeria, the state's inability to address escalating insecurity has revitalized the role of civilian defense groups, even in urban settings (Akinlabi & Ihemeje, 2021). Many Nigerians now rely on these community-based groups for protection, viewing them as more reliable and efficient than official security agencies (Ojiezele, 2022).

To curb rising crime rates, several regions have institutionalized regional informal security structures. For example, in northern Nigeria, *Hisbah*—an Islamic security outfit—was established to enforce Sharia law and promote moral conduct (Onuoha, 2010; Rasmussen, 2013). Similarly, the *Eastern Security Network (ESN)* emerged in the southeast as a response to the central government's perceived neglect, aiming to protect communities and assert regional autonomy (Nwankpa, 2021). The *Amotekun Corps* was subsequently created in the southwest as a regional response to escalating insecurity.

Amotekun: Roles and Strategies in Southwestern Nigeria

Amotekun (meaning "Leopard" in the Yoruba language) is a community-based security initiative established in 2020 by the six Yoruba-speaking states of southwestern Nigeria—Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ondo, Osun, and Ekiti. This initiative marks a significant shift from Nigeria's traditionally centralized policing model toward a regional, community-oriented approach (Akanle, 2020). *Amotekun* combines traditional, indigenous, and modern security techniques to combat threats such as kidnapping, armed robbery, and banditry (Akinyemi & Isumonah, 2020).

According to Abioye (2020), *Amotekun* represents a paradigm shift from centralized policing to a participatory, community-based security framework rooted in local knowledge and self-determination. The strategic framework for *Amotekun* identifies the following key roles:

1. **Community Policing:** Collaborating closely with local communities to gather intelligence and address grassroots security challenges (Akinyemi & Isumonah, 2020).
2. **Crime Prevention and Rapid Response:** Preventing crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, and cattle rustling while ensuring timely and efficient response mechanisms (Nwabueze, 2021).
3. **Support to State Security Agencies:** Working alongside state and federal security institutions to provide additional manpower and localized expertise (Ogundipe, 2020).
4. **Conflict Mediation:** Facilitating the resolution of intercommunal conflicts, particularly herder-farmer clashes, and promoting peaceful coexistence (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2020).

Theoretical background

Theoretical frameworks encompass interconnected concepts, ideas, and principles employed to explain social phenomena. In this study, they serve to illuminate the emergence of *Amotekun* by examining the underlying factors and motivations driving its creation. The research is anchored in the **Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) Theory**.

This study adopts the SCP Theory to analyze the contextual and motivational factors that influenced the establishment of *Amotekun* in the southwestern region of Nigeria. The theory, developed by British criminologists Ronald V. Clarke and Marcus Felson in the 1980s, posits that manipulating situational factors can reduce criminal opportunities and thereby lower crime rates. SCP provides valuable insights into the situational dynamics of crime and informs the design of effective crime prevention strategies. It emphasizes evidence-based approaches that focus on enhancing public safety through practical interventions.

By modifying immediate environments to increase the perceived risks and decrease the anticipated rewards for potential offenders, situational crime prevention aims to influence decision-making processes and deter criminal behavior. Effective strategies also minimize crime displacement by addressing the situational roots of offending, rather than merely shifting crime to other locations or targets. Such strategies include altering physical and social environments—through measures like improved surveillance, increased patrols, and the installation of physical barriers—while strengthening cooperation between communities and law enforcement agencies.

Overall, the Situational Crime Prevention Theory provides a robust explanatory framework for understanding how *Amotekun* contributes to crime prevention and control in southwestern Nigeria. Since the theory focuses on altering environments and reducing criminal opportunities, the objectives and operational strategies of *Amotekun*—including increasing perceived risks, reducing rewards, removing provocations, and facilitating compliance—align closely with its principles. Through proactive patrols and a visible community presence, *Amotekun* enhances deterrence by heightening the perceived likelihood of detection, thereby reducing the feasibility of criminal activity. Integrating SCP principles enables *Amotekun* to create an environment less conducive to crime, strengthening the overall effectiveness of local and regional crime prevention efforts in Nigeria's southwest.

Data and Methods

Study Location

This study employed an exploratory and qualitative research design. It was conducted in **Ondo State**, located within the southwestern geopolitical region of Nigeria. Ondo State is one of the Yoruba-dominated states in the country. It comprises 18 local government areas and lies between

longitudes 4°30' and 6° East, and latitudes 5°45' North, placing it entirely within the tropical zone (DAWN Commission, 2021).

The state is bordered by Ekiti and Kogi States to the north, Edo State to the east, Oyo and Ogun States to the west, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. Covering an area of approximately 14,788.72 square kilometers, Ondo State recorded a population of 3,460,877 in the 2006 census—1,745,057 males and 1,715,820 females. According to projections by the Ondo State Bureau of Statistics (2020), the population is estimated at 4,883,792.

Ondo State is a coastal area with a heterogeneous population. The majority of residents engage in subsistence farming, fishing, and trading. The state possesses a rich cultural heritage, reflected in its palaces, antiquities, and artifacts. Yoruba is the predominant language, although several local dialects are also spoken. Ondo State is endowed with fertile agricultural land and is a leading producer of maize, yam, kola nut, palm oil, and cocoa. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2013), Ondo ranks among Nigeria's largest producers of cocoa and palm oil.

The state has experienced various security challenges, including herder–farmer conflicts, kidnapping, and communal clashes. Ondo was purposively selected as the study location because it is centrally situated within the southwestern region, and its government played a leading role in establishing and supporting the *Amotekun* security network.

Study Population

The study population comprised members of the *Amotekun Corps* serving in Ondo State. These officers play critical roles in shaping and interpreting the *Amotekun* initiative and thus provide valuable insights into its operations and impact.

Sampling Procedure

A multistage sampling technique was adopted, combining venue-based and convenience sampling methods to select 31 participants from the study population. **In-depth interviews** served as the primary data collection method, enabling a nuanced exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives.

Method of Data Analysis

The collected qualitative data were analyzed using **thematic analysis**. Interview transcripts were first transcribed verbatim and reviewed by two qualitative research experts. Revisions were made based on their comments and recommendations. Thereafter, key themes were identified, coded, and organized to facilitate systematic interpretation and to highlight recurring patterns within the data.

Results

Table – Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Amotekun Officers, Police, and Community Leaders

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	22	71
Female	9	29
Total	**31**	**100**
Age		
20–44 years	2	10
45–54 years	4	30
55–75 years	9	60
Total	**31**	**100**
Ethnic Affiliation		
Yoruba	31	100

Source: Author's fieldwork, 2023

Socio-Demographic Overview

The table above presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants. A total of 31 members of the *Amotekun* Corps serving in various communities across Ondo State participated in the study. The majority of respondents (71%) were male, while 29% were female. Participants' ages ranged between 20 and 75 years; most (60%) were within the 55–75 age group, 30% between 45–54 years, and 10% between 20–44 years.

Composition of the Force

The interview data show that all *Amotekun* members in Ondo State are of Yoruba ethnic origin. No individuals from other ethnic groups or regions have been recruited into the corps. According to participants, this is because Ondo is one of the core Yoruba states. However, it should be noted that the state also hosts people from other parts of Nigeria—particularly from Kogi and Edo States, which border Ondo to the north and east, respectively. Consequently, non-Yoruba residents coexist within the local communities across the state.

When asked whether the ethnic composition of *Amotekun* could lead to bias or discrimination against non-Yoruba residents, participants consistently denied such tendencies. They emphasized that the corps operates inclusively, prioritizing the safety and well-being of all inhabitants regardless of ethnicity. As one participant explained:

> *"We work for all Nigerians, and there is no bias in the operations of Amotekun".*

Another participant elaborated:

> *"Although all members of Amotekun are Yoruba, the force responds to every security call from all groups in our communities. We do not discriminate in any way". — KII, Amotekun Officer, 45 years, Ondo State*

Reasons for the Establishment of Amotekun

Consistent with previous studies, the findings reveal that rising incidents of violent crime—including kidnapping, ritual killings, armed robbery, and persistent herder–farmer clashes—alongside the inability of formal security agencies to curb these threats, led to the creation of *Amotekun* in southwestern Nigeria (Onuoha, 2018).

Most participants stated that escalating insecurity in their communities necessitated the formation of local security networks, which later evolved into *Amotekun*. One respondent recounted:

> *"…the egregious acts perpetrated by herdsmen—such as rape, maiming, and killing of innocent people, and the destruction of farms—caused widespread fear. The growing number of kidnappings, armed robberies, and ritual killings compelled citizens to demand immediate action". — KII, Youth Leader, 40 years, Ondo State*

Another participant added:

> *"Many of us supported the re-establishment of local security forces due to the incessant killings, destruction of property, and kidnappings. We appealed to traditional rulers to seek government intervention, as state security agencies appeared overwhelmed. This eventually led to the creation of the Amotekun security corps". — KII, Female Community Leader, 45 years, Ondo State*

A further respondent observed:

> *"…the primary purpose of establishing Amotekun was to fill the gap that formal security institutions, particularly the police, could not effectively address. In line with the constitutional duty of state governments to protect lives and property, Amotekun*

> *was created to complement the Nigeria Police Force. Given the complexity of Nigeria's security landscape—including banditry, Boko Haram insurgency, herder–farmer conflicts, and armed robbery—there was a need for personnel who understood local languages and cultures and were trusted by the people". — KII, Male Community Leader, 60 years, Ondo State*

These findings align with Onuoha's (2018) analysis of vigilante and informal security groups in Nigeria, which explored their historical development, motivations, operational structures, and contributions to local safety. Similarly, security analyst Jackson Lekan Ojo of the International Security Association (Switzerland) argued that:

> *"Amotekun is a function of a loss of confidence in the state's security apparatus. When citizens lose faith in the state, they resort to self-help" (Vanguard, 2020b, p. 2).*

The results also correspond with Clarke and Felson's (1980) **Situational Crime Prevention Theory**, which posits that offenders engage in rational decision-making based on perceived risks and rewards. By altering situational factors—such as target attractiveness, guardianship (as provided by Amotekun), and access—Amotekun's presence can influence offender decision-making and deter criminal behavior.

Amotekun as a Tool for Regionalism?

Although most participants emphasized that *Amotekun* was established to address security needs and complement formal law enforcement, some also acknowledged its potential role in advancing a Yoruba socio-political agenda. This reflects broader discussions about regional autonomy within Nigeria's federal framework.

A male community leader explained:

> *"Amotekun was established not only to combat crime but also to address all security-related challenges in Yorubaland. The force is prepared to uphold policies that promote the Afenifere agenda".*

Another participant added:

> *"While some ethnic groups perceive Amotekun as a tool to undermine the federal structure, our operations are peaceful and focused on security. Nonetheless, we are aware of the Afenifere vision and remain pro-Yoruba. Amotekun officers swear an oath of allegiance to the Yoruba homeland, not to the Federal Republic of Nigeria. We are a pro-Yoruba force, ready to serve under the directives of Yoruba leaders". — KII, Male Community Leader, 60 years, Ondo State*

Discussion

The present study examines whether the Yoruba socio-political agenda to establish a regional government has influenced the creation of the *Amotekun* security force in the southwestern geopolitical region of Nigeria. It is well known that Nigerian communities—particularly in the southwest—face a wide range of security challenges, including kidnapping, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and other forms of organized crime. The inability of state security institutions to effectively manage these problems prompted the formation of regional initiatives aimed at addressing these escalating threats. One such initiative is the establishment of *Amotekun*, a localized security outfit operating across selected states in the southwestern region.

Consistent with previous investigations, the findings of this study indicate that the emergence of *Amotekun* stems from concerns over the inadequacies of Nigeria's centralized security architecture in responding to the dynamic nature of contemporary criminal activities

(Oyewole, 2020; Akinola & Oyewole, 2020). The necessity for such localized initiatives lies in the creation of a force that understands the local terrain, provides timely intelligence, and complements formal law enforcement efforts by facilitating effective monitoring of criminal hideouts. Participants overwhelmingly agreed that the primary rationale behind *Amotekun's* establishment was to combat the growing incidence of violent crimes—such as kidnapping, herder–farmer clashes, armed robbery, and homicide. This suggests that *Amotekun* was conceived as a situational crime prevention mechanism tailored to address region-specific security threats in southwestern Nigeria.

In line with situational crime prevention theory, effective crime control strategies are designed to modify immediate environments, thereby displacing criminal activity and addressing its underlying causes. Based on existing literature and participants' accounts, *Amotekun* appears to have achieved this through increased surveillance, intelligence gathering, community patrols, and collaboration with other law enforcement agencies—actions that have disrupted and limited offenders' operations in the region (Oyewole, 2020; Akinola & Oyewole, 2020; Alemika & Chukwuma, 2005).

However, the perspectives shared by interviewees suggest that *Amotekun's* objectives may extend beyond its formal security mandate, particularly in advancing the Yoruba socio-political agenda championed by **Afenifere**. Participants expressed strong support for this agenda and a willingness to contribute to its realization. Although this study did not directly examine the orientation or indoctrination processes of *Amotekun* members regarding the Yoruba nation movement, their responses suggest that this commitment may have been internalized—possibly during the induction process.

The homogenous Yoruba composition of the force indicates a deliberate exclusion of other ethnic groups, potentially to prevent infiltration and ensure ideological cohesion. Some observers have speculated that *Amotekun* might share sensitive information in support of regional governance ambitions, potentially undermining Nigeria's centralized security framework. Participants' readiness to support policies aligned with the Yoruba nation agenda implies that *Amotekun* may have been established with dual objectives—enhancing regional security while simultaneously fostering Yoruba regionalism.

This interpretation aligns with **Kabiru Adamu's** critique, cited by Abolade in *The ICIR* (July 19, 2021), which argued that South-West governors launched *Amotekun* without an impartial security assessment, reacting instead to perceived federal bias rather than conducting a comprehensive analysis of regional security dynamics.

Conclusions

The emergence of *Amotekun* in southwestern Nigeria represents a critical response to the perceived deficiencies of national security agencies in addressing localized security challenges. Rooted in historical traditions of regional autonomy and self-determination, *Amotekun* signifies a revival of indigenous security practices adapted to the unique socio-cultural and geographical context of the region.

This study examined the potential use of *Amotekun* as a socio-political instrument of the Yoruba–Afenifere movement to advance the agenda of regional governance in the southwestern geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Based on the findings of this research and the application of situational crime prevention theory, the study concludes—consistent with previous investigations—that the *Amotekun* Corps was primarily established to curb criminal activities in the region. However, there remains a possibility that the force could be mobilized or armed to pursue objectives beyond its official mandate of maintaining law and order.

To prevent potential instability or confrontation between *Amotekun* (if redirected toward political or regionalist aims) and federal security agencies tasked with maintaining law and order in the southwest, it is imperative that the central government—through the Ministry of Defence and

the Department of National Security—reaffirm its regulatory authority. Likewise, state governments in the southwest should clearly define and adhere to the operational roles and limitations of *Amotekun* as stipulated in the enabling laws and implementation frameworks that established the corps.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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