DETERMINANTS AND IMPACT OF ARMED ROBBERY IN THE CITY OF BAMENDA, CAMEROON

Ofe Ako-Mbi Aku Elvis*
PhD Candidate, The University of Bamenda, Bamenda, Cameroon

Simon Tata Ngenge, Mark Bolark Funteh
Professor of History, Faculty of Arts, The University of Bamenda, Bamenda, Cameroon

ABSTRACT
This paper examines the determinants and impact of armed robbery in the city of Bamenda. Armed robbery remained a source of continuous threat, harassments, violence and intimidation to the city dwellers of Bamenda, North West Region of Cameroon. Therefore, armed robbery was considered a crime as stipulated by the Cameroon penal code of 2016. The paper argues that armed robbery in the city of Bamenda caused socio-economic and political imbalances among the social stratum of the city inhabitance. The study adopts the qualitative approach to assess the causes and impact of armed robbery in the city of Bamenda. Our findings revealed that though efforts had been initiated by the state and indigenous inhabitants to eradicate the predicaments of armed robbery in the city, armed robbery continued to permeate into the fabrics of the city.

Keywords: Robbery, Crime, Economic, Prevention, Control, Social, impact, Inequality

Introduction
Armed robbery has been defined variously by different authors, but in this paper, it simply refers to a process that involves the forceful deprivation of some innocent individuals of their lawful belongings by an armed individual or group of individuals without recourse to the law. Among the many crimes in the city of Bamenda, armed stood tall as it plagued the peaceful existence of the city for a long time. Despite the fact that the Cameroon penal code prescribed serious sanctions for this crime, and the angry mob often resorted to jungle justice, exacting extrajudicial killings, the act continued as the armed robbers showed resilience with changing security paradigms in the city. Aside from the fact that armed robbery was an infringement on the fundamental human rights of the victim, its victims usually suffered certain tremendous negative social and economic consequences.1

This phenomenon of armed robbery was not limited to the city of Bamenda, as it was experienced in other parts of the country and the sub-region.2 Victims of armed robbery cut across all classes of the society, although the wealthy with more valuable items, and the vulnerable received the most attacks. Hotspots in the city of Bamenda experienced high robbery attacks as compared to areas with less hustle and bustle. This notwithstanding, spontaneous robbery attacks took place when the opportunity presented itself, for example, in areas of low security where a potential victim surfaced with valuable items either in cash or kind and had no security.

Despite efforts that were made by the government and local population to deter or prevent armed robbery, the phenomenon just like other crimes persisted. The malicious impact of this persistent occurrence of armed robbery in the city constituted a threat and challenge to the city’s security and development.

Data from secondary sources was used to analyze the problem why armed robbery persisted in the city of Bamenda with the sole aim of understanding the determinants and impact of the problem and recommending some viable solutions towards curbing or possibly eradicating it in the city and country at large. It is argued that armed robbery and indeed other crimes were linked to some significant imbalances in the existing social system of the society and until certain measures are drastically taken, the problem will not only continue to

permeate the society but its dire consequences may seriously be catastrophic to national peace, unity and development. This provided the background for which this article explains some of the burning issues concerning the determinants and impact of armed robbery and insecurity in the city of Bamenda.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The materialist philosophy on society and social phenomena was utilized in this study. The school locates its paradigm within the Conflict/ Marxist perspective. The major argument of the school is that, the causes of social phenomena, events and human behaviors can be explained and understood contextually focusing on the existing material arrangement of the society. The material arrangement of every society determines the behaviors of its members and the kind of actions that they would produce at a given point in time and situation. In other words, social actions and problems are a direct reflection or products of the existing material arrangement of the society.

The city of Bamenda just as the entire Cameroon state operated a capitalist society in which the success of an individual was more valued than the success of all. As such, the material arrangement of the system was characterized by structural imbalances with manifestations of some features of inequality, unemployment, poverty, injustice, and inhumanity which were responsible for the occurrences of social problems such as armed robbery in the city and the country in general. This scenario was the case experienced in many other African countries like Nigeria and South Africa in which the political arrangement in a society were such that there was an unequal access to power among the citizens to the extent that only the tiny group of elites had it.4

Political power was thus acquired not exclusively for the development of the society and for the improvement of the quality of life of majority of the people, but for the self-aggrandizement of the tiny group of those in positions of authority and their cronies or collaborators.5 The political class struggled for power in order to further their personal socio-economic interests irrespective of the larger interest of the people. In this regard, public resources, at all levels of government, meant to cater for the basic needs of the people such as building infrastructures, conquering poverty, hunger, unemployment, diseases, etc, ended up in the private pockets of those in authority and their collaborators.6 The political culture was that politics was seen as business and business was politics. This scenario, according to this school of thought, in the end not only created a perpetual wide gap between the rich and the poor in the society, but also created unending ravaging poverty, unemployment, hunger, death, etc in this system; politics was a zero-sum game, a winner-takes-all situation. But then the oppressed and exploited members of the society responded to their unfortunate conditions in unprecedented ways and manners that were unlawful such as armed robbery which endangered the city’s security and development.

Also, vertical acceleration in the society depended on the economic myth of an individual. This is to say wealth, power, status and prestige were highly rooted in the individual’s economic strength so that only those who had the money afforded it, whether they were credible or not. This scenario did not only alienate the masses, but also seriously undermined traditional moral norms and values. The consequence of this was that incredible and morally bankrupt individuals ended up in high positions of authority.

This situation had a high propensity to bring corruption in the system because as Ake opines, when politics becomes the affairs of businessmen and women, corruption will be the order of the day because those who invested in the business of politics expected maximum profits in return which was only possible through the siphoning of public resources. As politicians and their collaborators siphoned public funds meant to capture poverty, unemployment, etc, into their private accounts through phony contracts and imaginative means, the society was left undeveloped leaving the people on their own to struggle for survival. This did not only leave some inhabitants of the city of Bamenda and citizens of Cameroon angry with these officials, but frustrated them, hence brewing the option of alternative means of survival such as armed robbery.

A view held by the materialist philosophy on society and social phenomena is that although it is not possible to eradicate crime from the society due to the nature of the political-economic system that existed, it

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could/can however be curbed through some measures of adjustments directed at addressing the determinants of the problem rather than the impact. Some scholars like Onu,\(^8\) suggested that the welfare of the majority of the people must be put in the front burner and this concerns massive eradication of poverty, unemployment, hunger, diseases, etc, and building massive quality infrastructures, as well as, removing social inequality and injustice from the system. This will no doubt go a long way in putting armed robbery at serious check.

**The determinants of armed Robbery in the city of Bamenda**

From independence, Cameroon’s worst challenge or predicament was that of insecurity caused by numerous criminal acts such as armed robbery.\(^9\) Among the cities of the country hard hit by this phenomenon of armed robbery was Bamenda. Several factors acted as determinants of armed robbery in the said city, and some of these determinants influenced the phenomenon in other parts of the country. Aside from determinants such as poverty, unemployment, corruption and economic crisis, criminals in the city of Bamenda exploited socio-political loopholes in the administration to legalize illegalities such as armed robbery. Among such situations exploited were the instability brought about by the reintroduction of multiparty politics in the 1990s, and the Anglophone crisis which began in 2016.\(^10\)

A great blow was dealt on the Cameroonian economy which emanated from corruption. This affected the entire nation and in some cities like Bamenda, youths who became miserable sought alternative means of survival. Ordinarily, corruption in Cameroon involved a gamut of illicit activities: government bribery and graft, election rigging, fraud, diabolical abuse of occult powers, medical quackery, examination malpractices, and deception. Corruption resulted in a certain type of politics that encouraged infrastructural underdevelopment and the disintegration of living standards in Cameroon. It was unfortunate that the provision of basic necessities of life, namely: basic healthcare, qualitative free education, free business start, social benefits, youth employment, drinking water, good roads and reliable electricity were not guaranteed for the citizens. As a result of corruption, scarce resources were diverted from basic human needs and thus, it destroyed confidence in the integrity of state institutions.\(^11\) The level of corruption in the country was so high to the extent that Transparency International ranked Cameroon the world’s most corrupt country in 1998 and 1999.\(^12\) Between 2001 and 2010, Cameroon’s lowest score was 1 per cent, and her highest score was 2.7 per cent.\(^13\) The data was normally measured between 0 and 10 per cent. A country was “clean” when it scored 10 per cent; that is to say, the higher the percentage the less corrupt a country became. In a 2003 survey carried out by Transparency International in five African countries (Cameroon, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana and South Africa) their police were rated highest in corruption.\(^14\)

Corruption was manifested in many spheres of the economy amongst which were the award of public contracts and state-run recruitment examinations; entrance into state schools which offered direct recruitment into the public service were bought.\(^15\) This made admission into these schools to be based on ascription


\(^9\) Interview with Mark Bolak funteh, Aged 46, Professor of History, University of Bamenda, Bamenda, 24 December 2020.

\(^10\) In 2016, lawyers and teachers of the English-speaking section of Cameroon went on a strike so that their working conditions amongst others be improved. The governments responded by using force on the striking lawyers and teachers. This situation was hijacked by politicians of the English-speaking regions or anglophones who had been having feelings of marginalization ever reunification in 1961. They demanded for a change in the form of the state, that is from a unitary-descentralised system to a federal system. Once again, the government responded with brute force and arrested leaders of the teachers and lawyers trade unions who had formed a consortium. Gradually, the situation degenerated into an armed conflict in 2017 with several armed cells developing all over the English-speaking regions popularly known as Ambazonian fighters of Amba boys. At this point, their request changed from a return to federalism, to an outright independence of the English-speaking regions to a new country they Baptized the Federal Republic of Ambazonia. These separatist fighters alongside government security forces carried out several atrocities in the English-speaking regions amongst which was armed robbery.


\(^15\) Such schools included ENAM(Advanced School of Administration and Magistracy), HTTC (Higher Teacher Training Colleges), HTTTC (Higher Technical Teacher Training Colleges).
rather than achievement. Many intelligent youths who merited entrance into these schools were denied the opportunity because they did not have the money to pay or because they did not have a godfather. The spirit of “god fatherism” applied in all recruitment and entrance examination. Thus, some frustrated but intelligent youths’ sort alternative means of survival like indulging in criminal activities amongst which was armed robbery.

In a research by the UNDP (2014), it was reported that 45.3% of Cameroonians were multi-dimensionally poor while an additional 17.3% were classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty. Coupled with urban expansion, the livelihoods of inhabitants in the city of Bamenda were below average. Unemployment and underemployment compounded the worsening situation of youths in Bamenda as many youths some with certificates were unemployed and others underemployed. This situation was worsened over the years as many youths graduated from higher institutions in the city and the country at large. Also, there was high rural-urban migration of youths from other parts of the country who came in for greener pastures. The high presence of youths in the city did not correspond with the available job opportunities, and as such, many of the migrant youths were left unemployed with bills to pay and needs to cater for. Thus, there is no doubt that armed robbery in the city of Bamenda was an outcome of the interplay between the two factors of ravaging poverty and unemployment. Faced by the twin problem of unemployment and poverty which threatened their need for survival some of the youths in the city therefore turned to armed robbery as a means of subsistence. For example, with failed business and no other means of livelihood, some inhabitants of the city turned to armed robbery. This explains the recurrent occurrence of armed robbery in the city of Bamenda over the years.

Another major determinant of armed robbery in the city of Bamenda was the hardship brought about by the economic crisis that hit the entire country beginning in the 1980s. Before 1987 when visible signs of the economic crisis were noticed, Cameroon had experienced general economic growth. There was a marked level of investment of public funds and many people were employed into the skilled and semi-skilled professions. There was an increasing production of goods and services and the prices of raw materials in the world market were encouraging. Most inhabitants in the city were hard hit by the economic crisis when it surfaced. Prices of agricultural products fell abysmally and civil servants saw their salaries slashed by over half, while some were retrenched. This made life so difficult in the city and as such, some inhabitants sought coping strategies amongst which was armed robbery. Some retrenched workers who resorted to armed robbery included Tengwan Zachariah, Che Wislon and Ndanga Paul.

The influence of education on crime in general cannot be overstated. With quality education the individual acquired the needed skills and capacity for legitimate employment to earn a living and conquer poverty. Poor early childhood education on the other hand multiplied the risk of criminal behavior at adulthood. Thus, there was a direct relationship between education and criminality in the society. The situation in the city of Bamenda was that a chunk of the inhabitants were grossly uneducated; the number of youth dropping out of school was tremendously high and the graduates who turned out annually from various higher institutions of learning were poor in terms of desired quality which would have engaged them for either white-collar jobs or self-employment. A lot of emphasis was placed on general education. This was evident in the high number of general education schools in the city as opposed to technical or vocational schools which would have helped the youths to be self-employed. However, given these circumstances, some youths in the city became a

16 Multi-dimensional poverty here refers to overlapping deprivations suffered by individuals in three dimensions: health, education and standard of living.
22 Ibid.
reserve of recruits for criminal activities. This also provided the background on which some of these criminals opted for armed robbery. In fact, a look at the socioeconomic profile of some arrested or convicted armed robbers from the newspapers, police cells and prisons in the city of Bamenda reveals nothing further from the truth.

Further, some inhabitants of the city exploited socio-political tensions to carry out their illicit criminal acts like armed robbery. Two major developments were exploited by these criminals viz the reintroduction of multi-party politics in the 1990s and the Anglophone conflict which erupted in 2016. From 1966 right up to 1990, Cameroon operated a single party state. This was the Cameroon National Union, which metamorphosed into the Cameroon Peoples’ Democratic Movement in 1985. However, this situation was changed when the Social Democratic Front (SDF) was launched at Ntarkinon Park, Bamenda on 26 May 1990 by Ni John Fru Ndi, the Chairman of the party. This was followed by the December 1990 Liberty Laws which the new deal government passed intended at liberalizing the landscape to include most portions/segments of the Cameroon society where youths could express themselves. The Grassfield folks especially after the formation of the SDF party on the 26th of May 1990 used this liberal atmosphere to ignore the law or violated it at any given opportunity. The slogan of Power to the People used by the SDF appealed to a good lot of the frustrated masses but it was ill conceived to imply the absence or order or legalization of criminal behaviour.

As a result of the reintroduction of multiparty politics, subsequent elections in the country had more than one party contesting for it and these elections were fierce. This began with the Legislative Elections of March 1992, the Presidential Elections of 11 October 1992, and the Municipal Elections of January 1996. Aside from the criminal offences that were committed by both the forces of law and order, and the propagators of multiparty party politics, a lot of criminal offences were witnessed in the form of post-election reactions. When the Supreme Court proclaimed Paul Biya as winner of the presidential elections on 23 October 1992 despite flagrant irregularities which were aptly documented by the National Democratic Institute (UDI), the population in opposition strongholds especially in the city of Bamenda reacted violently. Angry youths took the laws into their hands; tyres were burnt along major streets like Commercial Avenue, Foncha street, Fon’s Street, and Savannah Street; houses owned by C.P.D.M members were incinerated with the inmates at times burnt alive; and some people out of their homes were burnt death. For example, Tita Fomukong, of Bali, President of the Cameroon National Party (CNP), was roasted alive in his house in Mankon. The increased social malaise, rising unemployment and corruption which Cameroon experienced after 1985 led to a steep rise in insecurity. The resulting effects were banditry and assassinations. Some of these acts had the proclivities of being politically motivated. The political turbulence after 1990 aggravated the situation. This was made worst with the introduction of the ghost townand “dead country” operations by the opposition political parties. In response to the Ghost Town operations which were looting, burning and physical molestations, with the government adopted the policy of “violence begetting violence.” This situation was well exploited by armed robbers in the city of Bamenda who went under the disguise of multiparty sympathizers to rob the population. Also, the Anglophone problem which degenerated into an armed conflict in 2017 was another situation exploited by criminals in the city of Bamenda to carry out acts of armed robbery. The root of this problem may be traced back to 1961 when the political elites of two territories with different colonial legacies—one French and the other British-agreed on the formation of a federal state. “Contrary to expectations, this did not provide for the equal partnership of both parties, let alone for the preservation of the cultural heritage and identity of each, but turned out to be merely a transitory phase to the total integration of the Anglophone

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27 Mbile, Cameroon Political Story: Memories of an eye Witness, p 339.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., p 336.
30 Ngoh, History of Cameroon, p 310.
region into a strongly centralized, unitary state”. Gradually, this created an Anglophone consciousness: the feeling of being ‘marginalized’, ‘exploited’, and ‘assimilated’ by the francophone-dominated state, and even by the francophone population as a whole.\textsuperscript{32}

The reunification of the French and English-speaking sections of Cameroon after forty years of living apart in 1961 did not go smoothly. The Anglophone or English-speaking section felt marginalized in several aspects of the union and their grievances grew as time went on.\textsuperscript{33} In 2016, a peaceful teachers and lawyers protest met with high repression from security forces.\textsuperscript{34} Schools were shut down and this lasted for several months in metropolitan areas, and years in communities located further from the metropolises. In 2017, the problem took a different turn as it degenerated into an armed conflict. This was because the situation was hijacked by politicians, and what was a mere call of reforms by teachers and lawyers turned to calls for separation or secession. A new nation “The Federal Republic of Ambazonia” was envisioned by the separatists.\textsuperscript{35} In order to preserve the territorial integrity of the country, the Head of state, President Paul Biya declared an outright war against the secessionists.\textsuperscript{36} This saw security forces attacking numerous armed cells or groups in the two Anglophone regions. The city of Bamenda, regional Headquarter of the North West region was one of the locals which were highly hit by the conflict. Numerous armed groups existed in the city and this made the city one of the most insecure areas in English-speaking Cameroon.\textsuperscript{37} Some criminals who had been carrying out wanton acts of criminality in the city like armed robbery exploited this situation to legalize their crimes. At that point, they carried out armed robbery under the guise of separatist fighters who were popularly known as “Amba boys”. Prior to the conflict, armed robbers were hunted and even lynched by the population but with the advent of the conflict, inhabitants of the town could not chase the robbers again as it was believed to be an army. Some individuals, who were not separatist fighters carried acts of robbery under the name of separatist fighters for example Tebah George (alias Commando), and Tang Jerome (alias Scorpion).

Further, some armed robbers were influenced by their families. Some families in the city of Bamenda were agents of destruction rather than preservation of traditional moral values due to the various unholy activities that went on there. Some family members acted as accomplice thereby encouraged their wards to perpetrate criminal activities such as armed robbery due to the material benefits they enjoyed as a result. Gone were the days when parents questioned their wards on their sources of spending if it was above their anticipated income. Some parents felt comfortable as they shared the booty of armed robbery and the young man or woman was celebrated and hail for hard work.\textsuperscript{38} For example, young men and women who shared material things around Christmas and New Year, among family members and friends were usually celebrated at their homes and the community in most quarters not minding the source of those things. By this singular act, other young men and women were therefore encouraged to also struggle to succeed using whatever means and no matter what. Thus, some resorted to armed robbery by means of abduction and extortion.

The influence of Western culture on African societies like the city of Bamenda equally acted as a determinant to armed robbery in the city of Bamenda. Western culture was propagated through the mass media on television channels, films and on the internet. The mass media through very powerful media determinant to armed robbery in the city of Bamenda. Western culture was propagated through the mass media on television channels, films and on the internet. The mass media through very powerful media determinant to armed robbery in the city of Bamenda. Western culture was propagated through the mass media on television channels, films and on the internet. The mass media through very powerful media determinant to armed robbery in the city of Bamenda.

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\textsuperscript{33} For details on how the Anglophones were marginalized, see Walter Gam NkwI, “The Anglophone Problem” in, Victor Julius Ngoh, ed, Cameroon from a Federal to a Unitary State 1961-1972, Limbe: Design house, 2004, p 191.

\textsuperscript{34} Ateki Seta Caxton, “The Anglophone Dilemma in Cameroon”, Accord, 2017, reliefweb

\textsuperscript{35} This vision has been sustained by non-state armed groups such as The Ambazonia Defense Forces (ADF), The Southern Cameroon Defense Forces (SOCADF)

\textsuperscript{36} Abdur Rahman Alfa Shaban, “Cameroon secessionists vow to fight despite Biya’s war declaration”, africanews, 04/12/2017

\textsuperscript{37} “Cameroon Conflict Insight”, Peace and Security Report, vol 1, Institute of Peace and Security Studies IPSS, March 2020


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watched by robbers in the city of Bamenda. Some popular movies like Money Heist amongst others glorified robbery and some criminals in the city of Bamenda began identifying themselves with characters in the Netflix Blockbuster. In fact, most young armed robbers may likely have acquired the methods and skills from the foreign media. Also, these movies portrayed criminals to be such great heroes and some having supper-human abilities. This won the interest of many youths in the city of Bamenda some of whom adopted the names of such criminal movie characters as nicknames and the criminal language of such movies.

The poor socio-economic condition of security agents especially police and gendarme officers in the country may have also contributed a lot to the persistent armed robbery occurrences. Apart from very poor condition of living which most of the rank and file lived owing to poor condition of service, the security forces had meaningful life insurance package for officers who died in active service. Security personnel remained one of the most poorly paid, yet they were expected to take care of their basic needs. This was at a time when the cost of things such as education, food, medicine etc, was astronomically high. Given this battered situation, some security officers joint forces with armed robbers in order to salvage their condition.40 In fact, this will explain why arms which belonged to the security forces found their ways to armed robbers. Besides, in most cases the arms that were used by officers in charge of combating armed robbery were far less, in terms of supply and sophistication, than that of armed robbers. Most times the fund meant for the welfare of officers and purchase of good weapons disappeared due to corruption at the top of the structure.41 Thus, these were among many other factors that were seriously killing morale in the security forces and as a result made it nearly impossible for armed robbery prevention and control in the country. Also, security agents were accomplices in arms trafficking. They allowed arms to enter the city. Upon detection, they received bribes which were very tempting to resist. This explains why arms from neighbouring countries like Nigeria could be used in the city of Bamenda for armed robbery.42 Also, community policing was not well structured in the city as the vigilantes received nothing as compensation. This pushed some of them to become accomplices with armed robbers, by leaking information of their patrol and guard to them. This enabled many armed robbers to escape the grasp of the vigilante.43 Notwithstanding, some people were inclined to turn to robbery just because of laziness. Such people still resorted to crime even if all the proposals made below were met.

An example of an armed robbery attack that took place in the city of Bamenda was that which occurred at Casino Royal Bar. Bandits stormed the drinking spot, on 30 October 1990, ruffled the customers, beat up and wounded the barman on the arm and face and made away with CFA 100,000frs. the drama that took place when the bar was at the peak of business led to a stampede where some customers jumped from the one storey building to safety. While women abandoned shoes and rappers which would have hindered their flight. Mr. Anye Henry, the barman confirmed that the bandits who were nine of them in number attacked customers in the bar with knives, clubs and broken bottles. In the same evening, a group of five-night marauders forced opened an off line licensed bar at Le Bien Street, scared its owner Mrs Angela Ngum and robbed her of CFA 40,000frs. because the bandits had learned to shift grounds faster than the forces of law and order, they went to the extent of mounting road blocks and squeezed money from taxi drivers and their passengers. This incident happened near the Bamenda Provincial Hospital on 30 October, 1990.44

The Impact of Armed Robbery in the City of Bamenda

The impact of armed robbery in the city of Bamenda were enormous. It attracted certain negative socio-psychological, economic, and political impacts. Some people lost their lives from armed robbery attacks especially as they tried to resist the robbers. So too armed robbers lost their lives when they were caught by an angry mob or shot by security forces as they tried fleeing from being apprehended. Some examples of robbers killed and victims of robbery included, Ashu Nwo killed in 2015 by an angry mob, one film star (his real names were not known) who was killed in Ntarikon in 2020 this was after he had slaughtered his girlfriend, George Nkonyam lost two cartoons of fresh fish to robbers in December 2005, Tazoh Remi was robbed at old simplicity on his way back from school (Longla Comprehensive College) in 2008 these were just few of the robbers killed and victims of armed robbery in the city of Bamenda. The recurrent occurrence of armed robbery in the city of Bamenda let to the rise of jungle or mob justice. Through this method, many armed robbers were lynched. Again, robbers who were caught by security forces lost several years of their lives as they were slammed long jail terms. This led to a loss of a possibility to develop meaningful careers.

41 Interview with Angoh Milton, Aged 36, Police Officer, 2nd District police Station, Bamenda, 14 July 2020
42 Idem.
43 Interview with Che George, Aged 53, Ex vigilante member in Nitob IV, Bamenda, July 21, 2020.
In cases where the armed robber jailed was the bread winner of his/her family, the absence of the robber from the family made those looking up to him/her to be frustrated as they lacked a means of survival. The result was that some of those dependent on the robber turned to robbery and other crimes as a coping strategy, on some kind of vicious cycle model. Sometimes the financial loss that ensued in the process of armed robbery did not bother the victims and their families but the fear that victims would be killed caused serious trauma. Thus, throughout the period, victims and their family members suffered serious torture and this lasted for a very long period of time. The names of some families and their integrity were destroyed as a result of a member of such a family indulging in an infamous act like armed robbery.

Again, armed robbery undermined peace, order and stability in the city of Bamenda. As people lived in the atmosphere of mutual suspicion and fear as a result of persistent occurrences of armed robbery in their communities, social and economic activities were slowed down and in some cases, crippled eventually. The negative impact of this on the domestic economy cannot be overemphasized. Further, foreign investment, which is a profound condition for rapid economic growth and development of society was stifled as fewer foreign investors wanted to invest in the city because of insecurity caused by armed robbery. It eroded traditional moral norms and values of the society. As armed robbers perpetrated their dastard and infamous act with impunity, other societal members’ especially young men were encouraged to join and with time normal ways were gradually substituted. Further, as a result of the rampant cases of armed robbery, colossal amount of human and material resources were expended by the government in the prevention and control of the problem. This amount would have greatly transformed the society if it was pumped into the economy. Sophisticated weapons used in armed robbery in the city of Bamenda were mostly imported. This acted as a source of capital flight as much money was spent on the importation and on smuggling, which further undermined the economic growth and development. Also, armed robbery led to a lot of forced migrations from the city or from quarters in the city. This displaced people who left unprepared to face other difficulties in the course of migration and settlement in new areas.

**Conclusion**

Among the many crimes that disturbed the peace and security of the city of Bamenda was armed robbery. Armed robbery in the city came about as a result of many causal factors such as ravaging unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, government poor response to societal problems like the reintroduction of multi-party politics and the Anglophone problem, etc. the study went further to argue that armed robbery attracted wanton socio-psychological, economic and political consequences to the victims, the armed robbers and the society. Such devastating consequences have the inclination to disrupt the social cohesion in any entity. As such, it is germane to devise means to stamp out this infamous phenomenon. As such, some suggestions have been made on how to prevent future occurrence of the phenomenon in the city of Bamenda.

1. The state should always respond to the plight of the citizens in a manner which is realistic and suits the context of the plight. This will avoid a situation where a small issue will be made to degenerate into and unprecedented conflict, and create an enabling environment.

2. Some changes ought to be done on the educational system so that more emphasis will be laid on technical and vocational training. This will enable youths to be able to be self-employed and not rely only on the government for employment.

3. Corruption should be fought at all levels of the society from top to bottom. This will enable basic necessities of the population like good roads, pipe borne water, electricity, etc to be made available. This will reduce the grievances of the population of the city.

4. Security forces should be well treated by the state and placed on good salaries with checks and balances. This will prevent them from falling into the bideof criminals and working as accomplices.

5. Government should urgently initiate a truly dynamic and all-encompassing youth empowerment scheme to cater for the unemployed and poverty-stricken youths.

6. Corruption should be seriously tackled by ensuring that culprits are not only apprehended but decisively punished irrespective of their social, economic and political status.

7. Entrance examinations into public institutions of direct recruitment into the public service should be free and fair. Admission should be based on merits not ascription.

8. There should be a control of the mass media and the internet in ensuring that materials that are antithetical to national and traditional interest are not circulated in the country.
9. There should be a change of mentality in the population that security of the city is left exclusively in the hands of security forces and community policing. A comprehensive approach should be adopted in which all hands are on deck to ensure the security of the city. As such, individuals should not hide armed robbers and other criminals. Rather, they should be exposed so that the law takes its course on them.

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17. Interview with Mark Bolak funteh, Aged 46, Professor of History, University of Bamenda, Bamenda , 24 December 2020.


