

Ungoverned Spaces and the Emerging Security Issues in Kogi State, North-Central Nigeria 2021-2025: Interrogating the Nexus

Bello A. Abdullahi Ph.D

Department of Security and Strategic Studies, Institute of Governance and Development Studies (IGDS), Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nasarawa State University, Nigeria

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100600817>

Received: 18 June 2026; Accepted: 24 June 2026; Published: 06 July 2026

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to explain the existence of ungoverned spaces in Kogi State, North-Central Nigeria and interrogate the nexus of this phenomenon and the emerging security issues in this part of the Country between 2021 and 2025. The study explores the upsurge in criminal exploits and the economic value that a better developed landscape can contribute to the overall wellbeing of the state. Opportunity theory of crime was adopted for the study, which attempts to offer explanation on why people commit crime. A structured 399 questionnaire were administered to a randomly selected 19 respondents in each of the 21 LGAs in Kogi State, out of which 342 were filled and returned. The questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively using tables, frequency, and percentage based on the data generated from the field. Findings reveal that, there is a rising cases of criminal abductions, kidnapping, highway robbery and other forms of terrorism in the state during the period of the study, and that the massive ungoverned spaces across the state coupled with illegal mining contributed to the phenomenon. Additionally, it was discovered that the poor condition of government roads and inadequate policing form part of the problem. The study recommends that Kogi State must evolve a comprehensive strategic plan towards the development of highly mechanized farming cooperative settlements that incorporate comparative advantage in the area of cash-crop production, in order to develop and regulate the ungoverned spaces. Transform most of the fertile landscape into economic value, set up its local police with requisite training, equipment and high level technology, while ensuring synergy with neighboring states in the area of security.

Keywords: Ungoverned Spaces, Interrogate, Nexus and Security Issues

INTRODUCTION

Globally Ungoverned Spaces are often referred to as areas that have complete absence of governance, thus allowing free access and lawless activities from non-state actors. Ungoverned spaces as a contested concept is also said to be characterized by expansive thick forests with difficult terrain making such places attractive and ideal comfort zones for non-state actors such as terrorist gangs, insurgents, armed robbers and kidnappers to thrive in areas of recruitment, training, and hibernation. Lack of adequate border control has been cited as the chief enabler of the existence of ungoverned spaces in most part of the World. For instance, it has been argued that terrorist groups have been found to easily adept to exploiting cross-border links established by local tribes, thus enabling groups to have a base for operation in one Country and carry out attacks in another, as shown in some Post-Arab Spring Crisis. This helps cross border kidnapping for ransom with ease of movement of victims with minimum disruption and also maximize the chances of delivering hostage to a known safe house, Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2014).

Studies have shown that ungoverned spaces may exist in strong states, including Western States that have sophisticated security capabilities, particularly where bomb factories have been found to have been temporarily established. Scholars have also argued that, factors such as the absence of state institutions are said to have make it easier for terrorist groups to exert its presence in these ungoverned spaces. Other factors includes, poor border control, external support, the presence of other lawless groups that help them to work together and having access to funding through kidnapping, extortion, and sometimes the taxation of local population, Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2014).

The Saharan and Sub-Saharan Africa and particularly the Sahel region has been identified as harboring areas that are said to befits the ungoverned space phenomenon, Schmidle (2009), cited in Clionadh Raleigh and Caitriona Dowd (2013). The level of governance within states which begin from state failure and divided governance to kleptocracies where state actors use the power of governance to pursue private interests rather than public good may also create the ungoverned area phenomenon, Aaron B. Frank (2022).

The Nigeria's security challenges spanning many decades especially as it concerns the operation of Boko-Haram and other insurgent groups have been traced to Sambisa forest, thus giving credence to the enabling roles of ungoverned spaces. Nigeria and other Countries around the Lake Chad basin have experienced increasing violent attacks in recent years by non-state actors, in spaces often referred to as ungoverned due to the weak presence of formal institutions. The Boko-haram camps in Sambisa, bandit hideouts in Kwiambana and Ajjah forests in Zamfara, herdsmen camps in Birnin Kogo forests in Katsina, Akure-Ofosu forest, havens for kidnappers in Guma forests between Benue and Nasarawa States or militant camps in the Niger Delta that host Africa's largest mangrove system are some of the evidences of the fortress provided by ungoverned spaces to criminal groups. Nigeria is said to have over 90,000km of designated forest reserves at independence in 1960. Ungoverned spaces are sometimes associated with illegal mining of gold deposits as shown in Zamfara and most recently in Kogi State of Northwest and Northcentral Nigeria respectively, Tajudeen Amusa (2024).

Statement of the Problem

Kogi State has experienced an increasing trend in the area of insecurity in the last five (5) years, as many of its citizens have been criminally abducted from their homes, markets, churches and travelers that were kidnapped along highways. Many communities in Kogi State and its people have become vulnerable to kidnapping, rape, extortions, disruption of local socio-economic activities such as religious and farming, and more importantly the loss of lives of innocent law abiding rural population. The highways in Kogi State runs through forested ungoverned areas with numerous mountains, and most of these roads are lonely and in bad conditions with poor security presence which enables the bandits, kidnappers and the insurgents to move freely and thrive in their unlawful activities.

The criminal Kabba jailbreak in 2021, and security onslaught coupled with pressures on the criminal terrorists in other zones such as the North-West and North-Eastern region of the Country, and the recent illegal mining of precious metals in Kogi West are said to have compounded the security issues in Kogi State between 2021 and 2025. The rising cases of terrorism, forceful abduction of citizens from their homes, and places of worship coupled with kidnapping for ransom on Kogi State roads during this period provided the basis for this study.

Research Objectives

The main objectives are to;

- i) Evaluate the emerging security issues in Kogi State in relations to the vast ungoverned spaces that exist within its territorial authority during the period under review
- ii) Proffer practical measures that the government of Kogi State can deploy in developing the ungoverned spaces for its security and economic benefits

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to provide explanation for the emerging security challenges, and how the availability of poorly utilized ungoverned spaces across the 21 LGAs may have contributed to these security issues between 2021 and 2025 in Kogi State. The outcome of the study will be of help to Kogi State Government, its people and the Nation in general. The study will also contribute and widen research discuss on how best ungoverned spaces can be developed for its maximum utilization, and for the overall wellbeing of the people who resides in the rural and urban areas in Kogi State. This work is limited to Kogi State including all of its 21 LGAs, and other rural communities, mountains, hills, rivers and roads that traverse and are located within its territorial boundary.

Scope of the Study

The ungoverned space phenomenon is prevalent in all the 36 states in Nigeria including the Federal Capital Territory, and most particularly in Kogi State the main focus of this study. Kogi State is located in North Central Nigeria with about Twenty-One Local Government Areas. These are; Adavi, Ajaokuta, Ankpa, Bassa, Dekina, Ibaji, Idah, Igalamela-Odolu, Ijumu, Kabba-Bunu, Kogi, Lokoja, Mopamuro, Ofu, Ogori-Magongo, Okene, Okehi, Olamaboro, Omala, Yagba-East and Yagba-West. The state is surrounded by Ten other states including the Federal Capital Territory. These states are; Niger, FCT and Nasarawa to its North and Kwara, Ekiti and Ondo state to its West. Edo state lies on its Southern flank, while Anambra, Enugu and Benue are on its Eastern boundary. Kogi State has a total land mass of 29,833km with a population of about 3,314,043 according to the 2006 National Housing and Population Census exercise. The State is inhabited by many ethnic tribes, and these includes; Egbira, Gbagyi, Nupe, Bassa Nge, Kakanda, Kupa, Agatus, Basa-Komo, Idoma, Igala, Igbo, Yoruba, Ogori-Magongo, Oworo, and these people are predominantly identified with Islam and Christianity.

Kogi State is naturally endowed with massive fertile landscape that can produce cash crops such as coffee, cashew, groundnuts, cocoa, oil palm, cassava, maize, corn, yam and fishery across the state in commercial quantity. The state is also gifted with the presence of natural solid minerals which includes, gold, iron ore, coal and huge deposit of limestones among others. It is home to the largest steel complex, that is, Ajaokuta Steel Company Limited, national Iron Ore Mining Company in Itakpe, and Dangote Cement Industry. Other downstream solid mineral related industries operate and thrive in Kogi State. The massive geographical land space being a state that is surrounded by 10 other states including FCT is said to have added to Kogi State share of Ungoverned Spaces within the national boundary.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study employed a mixed-methods research design incorporating both secondary data and primary data collection. Secondary data were obtained from previously published scholarly works and credible media sources, including newspaper publications relevant to the research topic. These materials provided contextual grounding and supported the interpretation of primary findings.

Primary data were collected through the administration of **399 structured questionnaires** across Kogi State. A simple random sampling technique was used to ensure that each potential participant had an equal chance of selection. Specifically, **19 respondents were randomly selected from each of the 21 Local Government Areas**, thereby enhancing representativeness and reducing sampling bias. This distribution strategy ensured broad geographic coverage and strengthened the generalizability of the study's results.

Conceptual Clarification

Concept of Ungoverned Spaces

Ungoverned spaces have been defined from divergent point of view. To some, it is seen as the virtual or cyber space which depend on physical infrastructure but exists and function in the boundless world. Others refers the concept to maritime areas and more as the physical remote areas whose geographical features make penetration difficult. For instance, the concept is seen as the physical or non-physical areas or territories where there is absence of state capacity or political will to exercise control or sovereignty. These territories are generally, characteristically rugged, remote, maritime, or littoral areas not effectively governed by a sovereign state, Adeneyi, O.P., (2023). Additionally, the concept is defined as any area that are uncontrolled and where government does not have control due to lack of presence of the security agents giving room to criminality to proliferate without any form of curtailment, Aderaya, A.A., et al (2022).

Ungoverned spaces connotes locations that are generally inaccessible, without an effective institutional governmental control or in which the national authority including all levels of governments has no ability to enforce laws, and or places that are poorly controlled such as maritime borders and airspace that is sometimes

difficult to control. In more general terms, failing or failed nation states that are not able to exercise sovereignty or lose control of some identified geographical areas within its territorial integrity can be said to have an ungoverned space in those uncontrolled areas, (Sackflame & Omitola, 2022; Agbonifo, 2022; Usman & Singh, 2021; Raleigh & Dowd, 2013; Rise, 2011).

Ungoverned spaces in this study is defined as a physical terrain or territory that is temporary and or permanently out of reach of sovereign authority, and which accommodate lawless individuals or groups where they conduct their unlawful activities with ease.

Interrogation

Interrogate is generally seen as when questions are formally asked in an attempt to establish a link. The concept transmit to interrogation when used in practice, and it is commonly refer to as information seeking endeavor that is aimed at getting at the truth. Douglas Walton, (2003) while analyzing augmentation theory identified many types of dialogue that are components of argument use, of which interrogation is a critical component. According to the author, interrogation is classified as a subspecies of information seeking dialogue, and the goals, conversational rules, participants, and techniques of the interrogation are identified.

Interrogating in this study is seen as efforts aimed at obtaining reliable information especially as it concerns the ungoverned spaces and security issues in Kogi State.

Nexus

Nexus as a term in Latin is said to describe the tying together and or something which binds. In the field of law, nexus refers to a direct link and or a connection between two clearly identified bodies. The EU Agency for Asylum (2024) defines nexus as casual link between events such as indiscriminate violence and harm. In this study, the term nexus is seen as the relationship between ungoverned spaces and security issues in Kogi State.

Concept of Security Issues

Security generally has been defined variously by scholars hinging their views from differing perspectives and referent. Security is most commonly associated with alleviation of threats to cherished values; especially those which, if left unchecked, threaten the survival of a particular referent object in the near future, and including efforts that are put in place in pursuit of freedom from all manners of threat, Paul .D Williams and Matt McDonald (2018); Barry Buzan (2009).

Additionally, Onoja, (2018) refer to security as that umbrella that sheltered everything about the lives of the people. The scholar argued that, living well and living above poverty of all types including access to basic needs such as, unhindered freedom, food, shelter, health, education on short, medium and long term basis is part of security. According to Onoja, security is not only about the availability of welfare and wellbeing of people, but having access to these basic needs are crucial, and that where these are either inaccessible or unavailable security issues are said to have emerged.

In this study, security issues is define as the situation in which citizens have substantially lost their basic freedom due to the criminal activities within the state. The rampant kidnapping and or abduction of people from their homes, farms, and churches and or armed robbery on highways when on transit during the period of study, that is between 2021 and 2025 are what constitute security issues that have emerged in Kogi State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Wanan C.T, and Terna V.T., (2024) investigates the impact of governance deficits on security challenges in Nigeria's ungoverned spaces. Using a qualitative approach, the scholars discovered that there is a multifaceted relationship between governance deficits, including institutional weaknesses, corruption, weal rule of law, and

service delivery failures, and security challenges such as insurgency, communal conflicts, and organized crimes. They recommend the need for the political leadership to strengthen state institutions, promote transparency, empower the marginalized groups, and leverage on technology to mitigate governance deficits and address security challenges.

Adeneyi, O.P., et al., (2023) examines the nexus between ungoverned space, armed banditry and human security in South-West Nigeria. The study reveals that armed banditry is driven by the inability or failure of the state to assume territorial control within its jurisdiction, and that the armed bandits took advantage of the availability of ungoverned space to unleash terror and endanger human security in the country. The authors recommends more government action in the area of the provision of modern technological equipment to monitor the ungoverned spaces.

Aderaya, A.A, et al., (2022) interrogate how ungoverned spaces promote herders-farmers conflict in Ondo State. This study discovered that herders uses ungoverned spaces as hideouts to carry out attacks against communities. They recommend that, ungoverned spaces should be developed by citing local industries , mechanized farm settlements and or transform them into tourist zones.

Sylvanus H.B., et al., (2021) explore the relationship between ungoverned spaces and insurgency in Borno State, Nigeria. The study reveals that Local Government Areas that have more forested cover and mountains such as Gwoza Mountain recorded higher incidence of terrorist attacks. The authors argued that the Boko-Haram terrorists relied on the Sambisa forest and Gwoza Mountains to launch attacks against state and civilian targets. Furthermore, they stated that the Sambisa forest (said to be the size of Belgium), Fagore, Kamuku, Kiyabana forests, Dutse forest, Rijana forest along Kaduna-Abuja express way and Dajin Rugu, a forest stretching from Birnin-Gwari in Kaduna State through to Zamfara forests are some of the ungoverned spaces in Northern Nigeria. The study shows that, bandits hold sway in these climes; terrorists, smugglers capitalize on the porosity of such places to smuggle Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework to which this study is anchored in Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) "Opportunity theory", that is an offshoot of Durkheim (1858-1917) and Robert Merton (1938) thoughts on normlessness, and why people break rules or commit crime. Emile Durkheim in the 19th century had explained a state of instability occur when basic norms and values of the society breaks down, and or become unclear leading to lawlessness or normlessness. According Durkheim, society is said to be lawless when rules, values, and expectations lose their power to guide behavior, leaving individuals feeling adrift or disconnected. Under this condition, crime level in such society are high and destructive. Merton's later view on deviance and why people break rules or commit crime was based on the way society itself is organized. The scholar described cultural goals and institutional means as the two key parts of the social system and that strain builds up when people cannot reach these goals through legitimate means. The pressure to succeed surges, and people may resort to deviant or criminal behavior to satisfying their wants.

The proponents of the opportunity theory derived their roots from the established position of Durkheim, and argued that access to illegitimate opportunities (like criminal networks) explain the types of crime people may commit. Furthermore, the theory focuses on the gap between what an adolescent wants and what they can legally get, and that the larger the gap, the greater their likely exposure to illegitimate means and willingness to use these means to get what they want. The main thrust of the opportunity theory are that, crime occurs when there is suitable (soft) target, a motivated offender and the near absence of guardianship, and that a crime happens when these three elements intersect at any point in time, (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Cohen and Felson, 1979). The justification for using this theory is that, a state of lawlessness is present when criminals have persistently unleash terror on the people in Kogi State and this has become a routine occurrence between 2021 and 2025 till date. These criminals uses ungoverned spaces across the state because of opportunity provided by these large areas, and most of the targets who are sometimes found in their homes, churches, farms, or traveling and are often seen as soft targets by the criminals that are easily abducted with huge price tag. Opportunity theorists have argued that, offenders weigh the costs and benefits of crime, seeking high rewards with low risks and minimal efforts.

Table 1: Showing Some Selected Incidences of Kidnapping, Abductions, and Other Crimes in Kogi State 2021-2025

S/N	DATE	LOCATION	INCIDENCES & CASUALTIES
01	Jan, 2021	Lokoja-Abuja Road	18 traders traveling from Kano to Aba in Abia State were kidnapped
02	Jan, 2021	Egbeda, Ijumu LGA	14 Persons were kidnapped while they on transit between Iffe and Egbeda in Ijumu LGA
03	Feb, 2021	Oshokoshoko, Obajana and Akpata Communities	A woman was kidnapped and a ransom of N200k paid before regaining freedom, and 1 other also kidnapped with N230k paid for his freedom
04	Sept, 2021	Kabba jailbreak	Many harden criminals escaped and were never captured.
05	Oct, 2021	Kabba-Bunu	Abduction of Chief Julius Oshadumo who was killed during a rescue operation
06	Feb, 2022	Ajaokuta train station	1 killed and 10 others kidnapped at the train station in Ajaokuta
07	May, 2022	Lokoja	A mother of 4 children was kidnapped on her way from evening church service in Zone B Area of Lokoja
08	June, 2022	Obangede, Okehi LGA	Abduction of Rev Christopher Onotu of the Catholic Diocese from his home in Obangede
09	March, 2023	Obajana Road	Six INEC officials kidnapped on their way from national assignment
10	Dec, 2023	Igalamela/Odolu	A reverend Fether was kidnapped
11	May, 2024	Osara, Kogi Central	Mass abduction of students from the Confluence University
12	Aug, 2024	Okene-Kabba Road	The Caretaker Committee Chairman of Kabba-Bunu LGA was kidnapped along with his aides
13	Dec, 2024	Ajaokuta	10 persons were kidnapped
14	March, 2025	Okete, Dekina LGA	2 women were killed within their farm by suspected herdsmen
15	March, 2025	Aiyetoro Kiri & Kotonkarfe jail break	5 persons were kidnapped and 12 inmates escaped.
16	May, 2025	Okeloke, Yagba East	A paramount Ruler was kidnapped
17	July, 2025	Ponyan, Yagba East	A retired army officer and another prominent farmer were kidnapped in Ponyan, Yagba East
18	Sept, 2025	Opamaru Village, Obajana	17 passengers were kidnapped as they travelled from Osun State to Abuja through Kogi State
19	Sept, 2025	Abuja-Benin Highway near Okene in Kogi State	12 passengers of Big Joe Motors were kidnapped near Okene
20	Oct, 2025	Isanlu, Yagba East	1 woman and her 2 kids were kidnapped
21	Nov, 2025	Obajana-Kabba Road	Several vehicles travelling from other States were attacked and many passengers kidnapped. 2 drivers and 4 others were killed
22	Nov, 2025	Kabba-Lokoja Highway	6 Senior Directors of the Federal Ministry of Defense were kidnapped
23	Nov, 2025	Ejiba, Yagba West	Many members of Cherubin and Seraphin Church were kidnapped during Sunday service in Ejiba
24	Nov, 2025	Aiyetoro Kiri Kabba-Bunu	Bandits attacked Kiri High School where 1 person was killed
25	Nov, 2025	Isanlu-Egbe Road	7 people kidnapped
26	Nov, 2025	Kabba-Okene	Over 20 passengers were kidnapped
27	Nov, 2025	Itobe-Ayingba Highway	15 passengers were kidnapped on the Itobe-Anyigba Highway
28	Nov, 2025	Aiyetoro Kiri	Bandits killed 1 person and made away with petroleum products
29	Dec, 2025	Aiyetoro Kiri Kabba-Bunu	Over 30 worshippers were kidnapped from the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) in Aiyetoro Kiri. 5 were killed

30	Dec, 2025	Jege Community Yagba East	Many residents were kidnapped
31	Dec, 2025	Okene-Auchi Road	Gun men killed a soldier and kidnapped 13 passengers during a coordinated attack on 2 commercial buses travelling from Delta State to Abuja
32	Dec, 2025	Kogi State	Bandits demanded between 200 to 500 million on the kidnapped pastor, 6 children, plus 14 others kidnapped from the church
33	Dec, 2025	Inele-Ugoh in Igah, Ikeje community, Olamaboro LGA	9 persons were abducted from their farm

Source: Author's Compilation April, 2026

Table 1 above present the records of some selected criminal kidnapping and other crimes in Kogi State between 2021 and 2025. The table shows that over thirty incidences of kidnapping, abductions and other types of crimes were recorded in Kogi State during the period under scrutiny. The year 2025 recorded the highest with about twenty criminal events, and more of these events were recorded in Kogi West part of the State. Egbe town that is the main boundary part from the neighboring Kwara State, is about 92.9km to Kabba with numerous human settlements far apart such as Okunran, Okoloke, Esanle-Esa that are located on Patigi-Egbe road. Other towns includes Odo Ere that have far scattered settlements like, Iyamerin, Okeri, and Igbaruku. Ode-Eri, Ejiba, Idofin, Isanlu, Takete, Ijagbe, Amuro, Mopa, Aiyetoro-Gbede, Eluke, Odogbo Akitipa and Abugi . These human settlements are characterized by ungoverned spaces between them which provided the terrorists the fortress to increase their criminal activities. These are places especially Abugi area that has an abandoned forest reserve is suitable for massive agricultural commercial products such as rice, cassava and other root crops. Illegal mining activities are said to be going on in this area.

Another flash points from Kabba axis are, Okene-Kabba highway that has a distance of about 38km and Kabba-Obajana road with a 45km travel route. These areas have huge mountain that connects them thereby making kidnapping an easy enterprise. Okene to Itobe in Kogi East through Ebiya, Eganyi and Adogo in Ajaokuta LGA is about 62km, and this terrain is prone to terrorist attack as it has mountains with difficult rugged environment. The Okene-Auchi highway which is about 69km is another route where public transportation and other road users suffers serious setback in the area of kidnapping relate crimes. The Itobe-Anyingba and Ankpa road is not free from criminal disruption as kidnapping in this part of Kogi State are on the increase. Itobe-Idah axis which is 44km has many settlements between them with large ungoverned spaces. For instance, Ajegwu junction to Idah is a hotspot including the Ajaka hills that the criminals uses as fortress. This condition also characterized the 56km Itobe-Anyigba highway, and the Bagana-Abejukolo axis which is a distance of about 23km.

Kogi State is naturally endowed with fertile large land scale spanning from Egbe, Isanlu, Ijumu, Kabba-Bunu, in Kogi West and with other far reaching settlements such as Okoloke, Akitipa, Aiyegunle, illah Bunu, Abugi, Budon, Jimata and Tawari township in Kogi-Koto Local Government Area. Kogi Central has connecting hills from its Edo State boundary in Ibillo passing through to Ajaoukta and with massive land scape between Okene and Lokoja the state capital. Kogi East with about 9 LGAs is massive in terms of fertile land scape, beginning from Itobe-Idah, Itobe-Anyignba, Anyignba-Ajiyolo-Abocho-Dekina axis. Furthermore, this area also have Dekina-Olowa-Gbokolo-Odenyi-Oguma, Ankpa-Inye-Abejukolo-Bagana and as far as Ugwolawo in Olamaboro LGA on the boundary with Enugu State. Idah to Ugwolawo is 25km with fertile land conducive for commercial rice production, while the distance between this part of Kogi State to Ankpa is 96km.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The reaction of the respondents who are residents in Kogi State on the rising cases of criminal abductions, kidnapping and other forms of terrorism and measures that the government can effectively deployed to transform these ungoverned spaces into highly developed landscape for better security and its economic benefits are presented and analyzed in **Table 2** and **3** below;

Increasing Incidences of Kidnapping, Abductions, and Other Crimes As A Result of the Availability of Ungoverned Spaces in Kogi State, 2021-2025

Table 2: Showing Responses on the increasing incidences of criminal activities in Kogi State 2021-2025

Statement	SA	A	D	Total
How long have you been resident in Kogi State	300 87.7%	35 10.2%	07 2.0%	342 100%
Security issues are on the increase in Kogi State	340 99.4%	0 0%	02 0.58%	342 100%
Ungoverned spaces contributed to criminal activities	251 73.3%	82 23.9%	09 2.6%	342 100
Public roads are bad and lonely	272 79.5%	30 8.7%	40 11.6%	342 100
There is inadequate security provision	305 89.1%	27 7.8%	10 2.9%	342 100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, April 2026

Note: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D)

Table 2, above shows the responses of Kogi State residents on the increasing incidences of criminal activities across the state and whether the availability of ungoverned spaces contributed to this phenomenon. When the respondents were asked, on how long they have been resident in Kogi State? **SA (87.7%) + A (10.2%) = 97.9%** of respondents jointly affirmed their long residency in the state of between 5 and 10 years, and above. Only **2.0%** said their stay is less than 3 years. The implication on this is that majority of respondents are well acquainted with the state and its problem such as security challenges in the last 5 years.

Asked, whether security issues are on the increase in Kogi State. **SA (99.4%) + A (0%) = 99.4%** of respondents strongly agreed that security challenges are on the increase across the state in the last 5 years. only **0.58% disagreed**. This response reveal a strong consensus on the rising security challenges and this align with Emmanuel, et al., (2019) who stated that due to the rising cases of insecurity in Nigeria there is hardly any day without acts of insecurity throughout all the regions, and that governments seems incapable and or unwilling of curbing the threat. The situation have shown its negative impact on the nation's economy, environmental degradation, fears and disruption, and have also stifled the rural socio-economic development.

When asked, if ungoverned areas contributed to the security issues in Kogi State. **97.2% (SA+A)** of the respondents agreed that ungoverned spaces largely provided the conducive environment to the rising insecurity, and **2.6% disagreeing**. This align with Ojo, (2020); Okoli and Lenshire, (2018); Cambell, (2018); and Olaniyan and Akinyele, (2017) that, a strong connection exists between ungoverned spaces and insecurity that is presently prevalent in Nigeria. They also stated that insurgence relies on the Sambisa forest to launch attacks in Borno State. Other users of the ungoverned spaces includes cattle rustlers, and that these areas are promotes violence by Fulani herdsmen and crop farmers leading to killings and destruction of property.

When the respondents were asked, whether the poor conditions of public roads across Kogi State was an enablement to the surging security issues. **88.2% (SA+A)** of the respondents agreed with this statement on the lonely and deplorable condition of public roads as slowing down travelers and thus contributing to abductions and kidnapping in Kogi State. Only **11.6% disagreed**. This align with Oyinloye, G.O., et al., (2022) who argued on how infrastructure decay especially the poor condition of both Federal and inter-state roads have contributed to the prevalent incidences of highway robbery and kidnapping in Nigeria.

Asked, if the provision of security personnel are inadequate on public roads and other places. **96% (SA+A)** jointly agreed that there are inadequacies in the area of security provision across the state. Only **2.9% disagreed**. This align with Ukwuama, Oke and Ninfel (2020) who argued that absence of security agents in unmanned thick forests paved way for bandits, kidnappers and herding militias to hide and launch attacks on the civilians.

Measures Towards An Effective Management of Ungoverned Spaces in Kogi State

Table 3: Responses on Measures that Kogi State Government can Deploy to Manage the Ungoverned Spaces

Statement	SA	A	D	Total
Transform the ungoverned spaces to mechanized farms	280	60	02	342
	81%	17%	0.58%	100
A highly developed landscape will contribute to economic prosperity	342	0	0	342
	100%	0%	0%	100
Increase the number of security personnel with better equipment and high level surveillance	321	11	10	342
	93%	3.2%	2.9%	100
Local Governance be given its constitutional role	265	50	27	342
	77.4%	14.6%	7.8%	100
Traditional leaders should supervise the ungoverned spaces	42	200	102	342
	11.6%	58.4%	29.8%	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, April 2026

Note: Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D)

Table 3, above presented the opinion of the respondents on practical measures that the government of Kogi State can deploy to have an effective control and utilization of the vast ungoverned spaces for a secured environment and its overall economic benefits.

When asked, whether the Kogi State government should develop the ungoverned spaces into mechanized farm settlements. **98.8% (SA+A)** overwhelmingly agreed with this statement. Only **0.58% (D)** of the respondents disagreed. This align with Omotola, (2019) who pointed out the need for more investment by government in the area of infrastructure, human capital, and technology in order to enhance its capacity to provide essential services and address socio-economic grievances, and foster resilience in communities across Nigeria.

Asked, if a highly developed landscape especially across the ungoverned spaces will contribute to stability and economic prosperity in Kogi State. **100% (A)** of the respondents all agreed that the growth, prosperity and economic wellbeing of the state and its people will increase if the ungoverned spaces are transformed into advance cooperative farming settlements. This align with Joe Studwell, (2013) who argued that rapid economic transformations are achieved with consistent policy aimed at land reform that is strictly tilted towards massive agricultural production, industrial manufacturing and finance that is focused on these two critical areas. The author added that, the developmental destiny of a nation is in its government's hands.

Asked, whether more security personnel be employed with surveillance equipment such as drones and helicopters by the state government. **(SA+A) = 97%** of the respondents agreed, while only **2.9% disagreed**. This consensus position of the respondents align with Sylvanus H.B and Mwanret, G.D (2021) that established the need for an advanced hi-technology, which is provided by advances in Geographic Information System (GIS) and Earth observations such as Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV). Additionally, Odewale and Lamidi (2020) have also argued that, the establishment of the Amotekun in the SouthWest help in protecting the people in that area.

When asked, whether the improvement of local governance can be of help. **92% (SA+A)** jointly agreed. Only **7.8% disagreed**. The important role of Local Government Area Council are reinforced by this overwhelming opinion of the respondents. This affirm the position of Wanan, C.T., et al., (2024) who argued in favor of the critical role of governance in shaping security outcomes, underscoring the need for holistic policy interventions to address governance deficits and foster sustainable peace and development in Nigeria's ungoverned spaces.

Asked, whether the traditional institutions be given supervisory role to oversee the ungoverned spaces. **70.0% (SA+A)** agreed. **29.8% (D)** of the respondents disagreed. This shows that, majority of the respondents overwhelmingly agreed with the statement that, the traditional institutions be made to have an enhanced role in

effective management of ungoverned spaces within their domain. This align with the Bawa, K.N., (2025) who emphasized the significant role of the traditional institutions in promoting peace, coordinating vigilance and sharing security information as means of preventing conflicts, and thus recommend their inclusion into the security framework in order to foster peace and stability in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study interrogate the nexus between the ungoverned spaces and the emerging security issues in Kogi State. The study discovered that, there is an increasing incidences of criminal abductions and kidnappings in Kogi State between 2021 and 2025, as about **99.4%** of the respondents agreed on this, while **97.2%** of the respondents affirmed the contributory role of ungoverned space to the rising insecurity. The year 2025 alone recorded about 22 of this rising crimes which is **66.6%** of the overall total from the selected five (5) year period of 2021 and 2025 that formed the prime period of study. The study also revealed that ungoverned spaces has a strong relationship with the upsurge in criminal activities across Kogi State during the period between 2021 and 2025, as these zones provide a conducive fortress for the terrorists and a place where their criminal activities have continued to thrive.

Recommendations

In order to address and reverse the rising security issues in Kogi State, the following recommendations are proposed:

Transform Ungoverned Spaces to Cooperative Farm Settlements

A comprehensive development strategy is needed for the ungoverned spaces in Kogi State. This must include the setting up of mechanized cooperative farm cluster in all of its three (3) senatorial zones, with good roads, mini-industries to add values to farm products, schools, health facilities, telecommunication and abundant security. The strategy shall take cognizance of what products each zones have comparative advantage in, while government must be prepared to buy off any excess thereof. The influx of illegal miners have made the state to record an astronomical rise on criminal abductions especially in Kogi West in 2025 till date. The government of Kogi State should regulate and coordinate the illegal mining sites across the state while giving high level role to the traditional institutions to oversee land areas within their authority.

Establish Kogi State Security Institution

Kogi State should establish its own state, local and area council police institution to compliment the existing Federal police. Men and women of sound and able mind that are highly trained be recruited across the state. Such state police must rely on technology, and with a minimum of 4 helicopters, patrol boats, 10 security vehicles in each LGAs and other rugged operational vehicles and telecommunication equipment that can access the vast difficult forest/mountain terrains. Kogi State government should set up a joint security cooperative team with all surrounding states which includes Kwara, Ekiti, Ondo, Anambra, Enugu, Benue, Nasarawa, Niger and the FCT.

REFERENCES

1. Aaron B. Frank (2022). Ungoverned Spaces: Problems and Prospects for a Working Definition. Chptr 2
2. Adeniyi, O.P., et al., (2023). An Appraisal of Ungoverned Space, Armed Banditry and Human Security in South-West, Nigeria. Journal of Political Discourse. ISSN Print: 2992-2763-ISSN Online: 2992-4618./Vol 1, No 3 September, 2023. <https://www.jopd.com.ng>
3. Aderayo, A.A, and Olusola, O. (2022). Ungoverned Spaces and Menace of Herder Farmer Conflict in Ondo State, South Western Nigeria. Jurnal Studi Pemerintahan. Vol 13(1). 112-132
4. Aju, P.C & Aju J.A (2018). Occupation of Sambisa Forest and Boko-Haram Insurgency in North Eastern Nigeria as Security Threat and Challenges to Sustainable Forest Management. Global Journal of Science Frontier Research: D Agriculture and Veterinary Volume 18 Issue 5
5. Bawa, K.N. (2025). The Role of Traditional Institutions in Peace Building and Curbing Insecurity in Borno State, Nigeria. Nnamdi Azikwe Journal of Political Science, 10(2), 89-111 Retrieved from

<https://najops.org.ng/index.php/najops/article/views/345>

6. Chilaka, F.C, Doutimi, Y., and Chigozie, J.N (2024). Ungoverned Spaces and the Challenges of Counterterrorism in West Africa Sub-Region. *Journal of Contemporary International Relations and Diplomacy*, 5(1), 1-20. <https://dio.org/10.53982/jeird.2024>
7. Clionadh Raleigh and Caitriona Dowd, (2013). Governance and Conflict in the Sahel's Ungoverned Space, *International Journal of Security & Development*. Vol. 2 Issues 2 DOI: 10.5334/sta.bs 2013
8. Douglas Walton, (2003). The Interrogation As A Type of Dialogue. *Journal of Pragmatics* 35(12): 1771-1802
9. Emmanuel, I.O., and Emily, O.A, (2019). Insecurity Crisis in Nigeria: The Law Enforcement Agents as Panacea. *Journal of Sociology and Social Work*, pp.44-57
10. Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2014). Human Rights and Democracy Report 2014-Country Case Study: Nigeria-Boo Haram and the Fight Against Terrorism. Gov.Uk <https://www.gov.uk>
11. Joe Studwell, (2013). *How Asia Works: Success and Failure in the World's Most Dynamic Region*. First Published in Great Britain in 2013 by Profile Books Ltd eBook ISBN: 978-0-8201-9347-6
12. John F. Padgett, (2016). *Evolution of Organizations and Institutions*, in David S. Wilson and Alan Kirman, eds., *Complexity and Evolution: Towards a New Synthesis for Economics*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press
14. Mukhtar Imam and Chubado B. Tijjani, (2024). Challenges in Ungoverned Spaces and the Crisis of Insecurity Across Sahel. *Advances in Social Science Research Journal*_Vol. 11, No. 1 2024 DOI: 10.14738/assrj.111.13669
15. Oyinloye, G.O, et al., (2022). Road Infrastructure Decay and Insecurity in Nigeria. *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*. Vol 10-Issue 7 (2022) pp:01-07
16. Paul D. Williams and Matt McDonald, (2018). *Security Studies: An Introduction*. 3rd Edition ISBN-13: 978-0415784900
17. Sylvanus, H.B, and Mwanret G.D, (2021). Assessment of the Impact of Ungoverned Spaces on Insurgency in Borno State, Nigeria. *Ghana Journal of Geography* Vol. 13(2), 2021 pg 31-65 <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gig.v13i2.2> March 12th, 2021
18. Uche Igwe (2021). Nigeria's Conflict and Insecurity Makes us Rethink Authority in Ungoverned Spaces at LSE
19. Wanan C.T, and Terna V.T, (2024). The Impact of Governance Deficits on Security Challenges in Nigeria's Ungoverned Spaces, *Journal of Political Discourse*. ISSN Print: 2292-2763-ISSN Online: 2992-4618/Vol. 2 Issue 3, No 1/September 2024