

THE IMPACT OF BANDITRY ON NIGERIA'S SECURITY IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC: AN EVALUATION OF NIGERIA'S NORTHWEST

Rosenje, Musharafa Olapeju (PhD)

Department of Political Science Tai Solarin University of Education,
Ijagun, P. M. B. 2118, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State.

Email Address: rosenjemo@tasued.edu.ng

Phone Nos: +2348074294124 & +2347065798489

&

Adeniyi, Oluwatobi Peter

Department of Political Science Tai Solarin University of Education,
Ijagun, P. M. B. 2118, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State.

Email Address: oluwatobiadeniyi30@gmail.com

Phone No: +2347035474264

Abstract

Banditry is fast becoming alarming in Nigeria's Fourth Republic to the extent that it poses a serious security threat not only to the Northwest region but to Nigeria at large. The level at which bandits operate within the landscape of Nigeria's northwest has led to spree of kidnapping, maiming of people, loss of lives, population displacements, loss of cattle, disruption of socio-economic activities in general, and equally brought about an atmosphere of uncertainty, a situation that has become worrisome to the government and the citizenry. This paper therefore examined the impact of banditry on Nigeria's security focusing on the northwest region. The paper adopted descriptive method, made use of secondary sources of data while the Queer Ladder Theory (QLT) and Frustration-Aggression Theory were employed as the explicatory framework. The paper posited that the presence of scarcely governed spaces, the high level of unemployment with the attendant poverty, weak security system, porosity of Nigeria's borders and arms proliferations, among others, are the driving factors accelerating banditry in the Northwest region of Nigeria. The paper further contends that the banditry pervading Nigeria's northwest undermines the security; peace and development of the region and that the efforts made by stakeholders to combat the scourge have not yielded the desired result. The paper thus recommended, among others, that government strategies and tactics should be more proactive in prosecuting the war against banditry; create meaningful employment opportunities for the youths with a view to addressing the endemic poverty that pervades the region. Also, government should effectively monitor and secure our borders with the neighbouring countries to checkmate illegal migration of people and arms proliferation while engaging in re-orientation of the individuals to inculcate in them ethical values and reverence for life and human rights.

Keywords: Banditry, Cattle rustling, Impact, Kidnapping, Nigeria's Fourth Republic and Security.

Introduction

The pervasive banditry and its associated threats to security, which have enveloped the Northwest region of Nigeria, particularly, Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Sokoto and Niger States, have become a worrisome national security issue of public concern (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016).

Reports indicate the flourishing of bandit groups, whose members were seen displaying automatic weapons, terrorising herders' settlements, farms, villages and the highways with the mission of killing people, kidnapping and pillaging cows (Olaniyan, 2018). It was reported that between October, 2013 and March, 2014, 7,000 cattle were rustled from commercial livestock farms and traditional herders in Northern Nigeria (Bashir, 2014; Tauna, 2016) while about 330 attacks were made by bandits and 1,460 deaths were recorded between January and July, 2019 (Abdullahi, 2019). In most cases, the bandits killed and maimed the people and raped the women before dispossessing them of their cows (Akowe & Kayode, 2014) while in some instances, they also kidnapped girls or women in the process (Adeniyi, 2015; Yusuf, 2015).

Suffice to say that the northwestern region of Nigeria encompasses seven states namely Kano, Jigawa, Katsina, Kaduna, Zamfara, Sokoto and Kebbi. Five of these states, which are Katsina, Kaduna, Zamfara, Sokoto and Kebbi have been mostly affected by the scourge of banditry. Of these five states, Kaduna, Katsina and Zamfara have been the most critical hot spots. It is however, pertinent to note that the incidences of banditry are not limited to northwestern Nigeria. In fact, it is also prevalent in some parts of north-central region, in states like Niger, Nasarawa, Benue and Plateau which are equally regarded as hotbeds (Kuna & Jibrin 2016).

Scholars like Gaye (2018), Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016), Suleiman (2017) and Mustapha (2019) have advanced several factors for the cause and prevalence of banditry in Nigeria. Some of the factors they argued include the fragility of Nigerian state, weak state institutions, especially the security agencies, availability of grossly ungoverned spaces, porosity of Nigeria's borders with its neighbouring countries and arms proliferation, weak leadership, corruption, unemployment and mass poverty. Furthermore, despite the federal framework adopted by Nigeria's forefathers, Nigeria's security architecture since the incursion of the military in Nigeria's politics is contrived in such a manner that the control of every security outfit is placed in the hands of the President at the centre. Though the governor is recognised by Nigeria's constitution as the Chief Security Officer of the state, in actual fact, he wields no power over the police that could be put to use in times of crisis. This precarious situation places every governor at the mercy of the President in the period of crisis at the state level denying him the opportunity to confront security challenges with expediency and expertise. This is one of the reasons why people are clamouring for restructuring that will, among others, effect the creation of state police to meet the immediate needs of every state.

There is no gainsaying the fact that banditry poses a serious challenge not only to the security of Northwest states but to the country at large in view of its ever increasing impacts and implications. The level at which armed bandits operate within the northwest region calls for attention by both the State and Federal governments, more especially, since the latter controls the state security apparatuses. This complex situation of social violence and insecurity in the affected states had been on for almost a decade now (Okoli & Ogayi, 2018). The increasing attacks of bandit groups have led to the destruction of lives and properties, displacement of people from their communities; and a growing numbers of widows; widowers and orphans, who now reside in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps following the continued attacks of armed bandits on both farming and pastoral communities across different areas of the states (Okoli & Ochim, 2016; Mustapha, 2019).

Though the police is traditionally responsible for the maintenance of peace, law and order within the nation, it appears that its personnel are being overstretched by the responsibility of securing

the political process and political functionaries of the state apart from the fact that it is ill-equipped to meet the challenges of contemporary security needs. In addition, Nigeria is under-policed, its personnel is grossly inadequate, running short of the United Nations requirements or ratio of one police to four hundred citizens. Furthermore, the salary of the police personnel is poor; welfare services are non-existent while there has been no incentive to boost their morale. The general social discontent and distrust among citizens have made the probable collaboration between the security men and the people fragile thus inhibiting the efficient and effective performance of security agencies in successfully confronting the bandit groups. This development has therefore, affected government efforts in achieving the desired goal of crushing banditry in the Northwest region.

Against the backdrop of the upsurge in incidences of banditry in recent times, this paper examined the phenomenon of banditry as it affects the security of the northwest region of Nigeria in the fourth republic. For the purpose of analytical progression, this paper is divided into six sections apart from the introductory aspect. The first section deals with the conceptual clarifications and theoretical framework while the second section traces the evolution and historical development of banditry. The third section discusses the factors promoting banditry as well as the dimensions and recent incidences of banditry in Nigeria's northwest region. The fourth section reviews the effects of banditry on the security of the northwest while the fifth section evaluates the efforts made at curbing banditry in the northwest Nigeria and the sixth section offers the conclusion and recommendations.

Concept of Banditry

Conceptually, banditry is a derivative of the term bandit meaning an unlawful armed group terrorising people and confiscating their properties. It is synonymous with the establishment of gang groups who use small and light weapons to carry out attacks against people. In this regard, banditry could mean a set-up criminal activity deliberately designed and carried out for personal gains. Due to the complex nature of bandits' activities, Egwu (2016) in a restricted manner, described banditry as a practice of stealing cattle and animals from herders or raiding of cattle from their ranches. In the same vein, banditry is reflected in criminal escapades like cattle rustling, kidnapping, armed robbery, drug abuse, arson, rape and the brazen and gruesome massacre of people of agrarian communities with sophisticated weapons by suspected herdsmen and reprisal attacks from surviving victims, a development that has been brought to the front burner of national security (Uche & Iwuamadi, 2018).

In his perception, Shalangwa (2013) regards banditry as the practice of raiding and attacking victims by members of an armed group, whether or not premeditated, using weapons of offence or defense, especially in semi-organised groups for the purpose of overpowering the victim and obtaining loot or achieving some political goals. Such bandits are usually perceived as outlaws, desperate and lawless marauders who do not have a definite residence or destination but roam around the forest and mountains to avoid being identified, detected and arrested.

However, where the term banditry is connected to rural, it implies a group of rural outlawed involved in illicit activities such as raiding of villages, kidnappings and cattle rustling for primitive accumulation of wealth. Thus, bandits are gang groups terrorising and dispossessing local people or travellers of their valuable items or properties such as merchandise, money, cattle, camel, and sheep, among others. They operate within and along rural borders with the assistance of their local collaborators including in some cases, state agents deployed to work for the safety and security of the people (Abdullahi, 2019).

In another sense, banditry refers to the incidences of armed robbery or allied violent crimes, such as kidnapping, cattle rustling, and village or market raids. It involves the use of force, or threat to that effect, to intimidate a person or a group of persons in order to rob, rape or kill (Okoli & Okpaleke 2014). Economic or political interests motivate banditry. The former refers to banditries motivated by the imperative of material accumulation while the latter has to do with those driven by the quest to rob, to assault or to liquidate a person or a group of persons based on political or ideological dispositions (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019).

Thus banditry, in the context of this paper, is defined as the totality of incidences of armed robbery or allied violent crimes, such as kidnapping, cattle rustling, village raids as well as highway raids which involves the use of force, or threat to that effect, to intimidate a person or a group of persons in order to rob, rape, kidnap or kill the victims.

Understanding the Concept of Security and Insecurity

The term security has not till date been accorded a universal conceptual outlook due to the fact that it has been considered from different perspectives. Some scholars like Igbuzor (2011) and Oche (2001) while conceptualising security placed emphasis on the absence of threats to peace, stability, national cohesion, political and socio-economic objectives of a country. It is conceived as to be secure and free from both fear of physical, psychological abuse, violence, persecution, or death and from want such as food, health and good job (Asmau & Abdulrasheed, 2020). Also, Omede (2012) sees security as a dynamic condition which involves the relative ability of a state to counter threats to its core values and interests.

Security can further be described as stability and continuity of livelihood (stable and steady income), predictability of daily life (knowing what to expect), protection from crime (feeling safe), and freedom from psychological harm (safety or protection from emotional stress which results from the assurance or knowing that one is wanted, accepted, loved and protected in one's community or neighbourhood and by people around (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013). It also focuses on emotional and psychological sense of belonging to a social group which can offer one protection. This description of the foregoing structured the concept of security into four dimensions. These dimensions can be woven together to give a composite definition of security as the protection against all forms of harm whether physical, economic or psychological (Olabanji & Ese, 2014).

It is, however, contended that security is not the absence of threats or security issues, but the ability to rise to the challenges posed by these threats with expediency and expertise. It demands safety from chronic threats and protection from harmful disruption (Igbuzor, 2011). Security embraces all measures designed to protect and safeguard the citizenry and the resources of individuals, groups, businesses and the nation against sabotage or violent occurrence (Ogunleye, Adewale, Alese, & Ogunde, 2013).

On the other hand, the concept of insecurity connotes different meanings such as: absence of safety; danger; hazard; uncertainty; lack of protection, and lack of safety. Beland (2005) opined that insecurity is the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection. It refers to lack or inadequate freedom from danger. Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Rabaro (2013) define insecurity from two perspectives. Firstly, insecurity is the state of being open or subject to danger or threat of danger, where danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm

or injury. Secondly insecurity is the state of being exposed to risk or anxiety, where anxiety is a vague unpleasant emotion that is experienced in anticipation of some misfortune. From the exposition above, the phenomenon of security or insecurity implies both physical occurrence and psychological state of mind that constitutes a challenge to peace and development of both the individuals and the societies. These definitions of either security or insecurity indicate that those affected by insecurity in the Northwest region of Nigeria are many.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted Queer Ladder Theory (QLT) and Frustration-Aggression Theory as its analytical frameworks. The origin of Queer Ladder Theory (QLT) is associated with an American sociologist, Daniel Bell (1919-2011), who coined the idea of 'queer ladder' in an attempt to explain the instrumental essence of organised crime as a desperate means of socio-economic empowerment and social climbing. This theoretical perspective has since fertilised into a popular theoretical framework widely used in contemporary crime studies. The basic assumptions of QLT are; organised crime is an instrumental behaviour, it is a means to an end; it is an instrument of social climbing and/or socio-economic advancement; and it is a measure to accumulate wealth and build power (Mallory, 2007; Okoli & Orinya, 2013).

Often ascribed to Queer Ladder Theory is the notion that organised crime thrives in contexts where the government's capacity to dictate, sanction and deter crime is poor; where public corruption is endemic; and where prospects for legitimate livelihood opportunities are slim (Nwoye, 2000; Lyman, 2007). Under these circumstances, the incentive to indulge in crime is high, while deterrence from criminal living is low. In other words, the benefits of committing a crime surpass the costs and/or risks involved. This creates pretext for criminal impunity and franchise (Okoli & Orinya, 2013).

Applied to the context of this paper, QLT enables one to come to terms with the prevalence of organised crime in Northwest region of Nigeria. In this regard, it is observed that the phenomenon of banditry in Northwest Nigeria has been driven by criminal quest for economic accumulation in an environment. This has been worsened by the prevailing socio-economic discontent and attendant livelihood crisis in the state, in addition to the seeming indolence of relevant government agencies towards arresting the ugly situation. The concept of 'Ladder' in QLT signifies untoward pattern of social mobility. Hence, those who take to organised crime, such banditry, do so as a desperate means of economic accumulation and socio-economic empowerment (Mustapha, 2019). Therefore, a necessary consequence of this trend is prevalence in crime rate and a state of insecurity (Okoli & Orinya, 2013).

The frustration-aggression theory was propounded by Fererabend & Feirauben, (1972) and captured in a monograph by five scholars in Yale Institute of Human Relations in 1939. The major assumption of the model is that aggression is always a consequence of frustration, and that the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression (Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939; Fererabend & Feirauben, 1972). They also defined frustration as an interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal response at its proper time in the behaviour sequence (Dollard et al., 1939). The interrogations and disputations that the perspective generated led one of the proponents to intervene with some modifications of the central thesis.

Thus, Miller (1941) noted that it was too general to assume that frustration must always lead to aggression or that aggression is always propelled by frustration. His intervention led to the second lap of the hypothesis which reflected a more acceptable reality that frustration produces instigations to a number of different types of response, one of which is instigation to some form of aggression. However, some years later, a significant modification came from Berkowitz (1989) who argued that aggression can be driven by inherent personal benefits to the aggressor and not necessarily by past wrongdoings and that people are more akin to attack when they discover that they are willfully sabotaged or denied what it's legitimately theirs than when the interference is an accidental occurrence. He surmised that frustrations are aversive events and generate aggressive inclinations only to the extent that they produce negative effect (Berkowitz, 1989).

Thus, the increasing attacks of bandits across the country, most especially in the northwest region, are largely driven by frustrations and struggles to generate economic assets. The alarming acts of banditry such as cattle rustling, kidnapping, physical attacks and encroachments on farms are bred by frustrations (Uche & Iwuamadi, 2018). Furthermore, Fererabend & Feirauben (1972) stipulates that aggression is as a result of frustration which results from an individual's inability to attain their goals. Accordingly, banditry is the product of aggressive behaviour which results from issues such as poverty and unemployment, among others (Maureen & Blessing, 2018; Adegoke, 2019). Applying this to the paper, banditry in the country is caused by the need of the disgruntled elements of the society to get out of poverty and climb up the ladder in socio-economic considerations. That is why the phenomenon of ransom taking is prevalent in banditry operations. However, where the ransom is not forthcoming, bandits became more tensed and frustrated and resort to killing their victims. This is why the two theories become mutually reinforcing and complementary in explaining the crisis at hand.

Evolution and Historical Development of Banditry

The concept of banditry has been changing over time, space and circumstances. A bandit in the 19th century Europe and Americas was a freedom fighter whose aim was partly to ensure the emancipation of the downtrodden from the upper class or colonised over the colonizer (Warto, 1994). Furthermore, bandits like Chucho el Roto, Herachio Bernel and Santanon were often celebrated as heroes of Mexican independence (Robinson, 2009). Therefore, Mexicans have warm regards and respect for those "social workers" termed bandits, while on the contrary, the State often considered them as nuisance and outlaws that need to be eradicated (Watts, 1987).

Therefore, in some pre-industrial societies, peasants see bandits differently from the State not as outlaws, hoodlums and miscreants but as avengers and bread winners. However, a bandit in traditional African setting is entirely opposite to that of America and Europe. The former specialised in armed robbery and other related crimes (Curott & Fink, 2008). The most common feature of banditry in Africa has been maiming, killing and wanton destruction of property, hence, it has a direct relationship with cattle rustling (Rufa'i, 2018). Since most herdsmen could do anything possible to prevent the rustling of their herds, then the bandit also apply force with the aid of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) to effect the stealing of livestock (Addo, 2006). Hence, the application of force during livestock theft is what is herein considered cattle rustling and armed banditry (Murtala, 2018).

From historical perspective, however, banditry is not something novel to West Africa. Its origin and development are as old as the sub-region itself dating back to inter-tribal periods characterised by conflicts and wars over scarce economic resources and territorial expansion for

political influence. Most parts of Africa experienced these forms of conflicts during the slave trading, colonial, and post-colonial periods. Though there have been remarkable changes on the nature and pattern of banditry and other forms of conflicts in West Africa, the socio-economic and political reasons remain significant in explaining the prevalence of the phenomenon in the sub-region (Abdullahi, 2019).

Perhaps, this explains why the struggle for political independence and the subsequent establishment of the post-colonial state in West Africa were considered as some of the major events which shaped the pattern of banditry in the sub-region. It also suggests that socio-economic and political realities could be used to explain the intensity, prevalence, and the dynamics of banditry as evident in different parts of West Africa. For instance, in Tillaberi and Tahoua region of Niger Republic, banditry such as cattle and sheep rustling as well as the killing of innocent citizens in border communities has a strong connection with the general poverty situation of the people arising from poor governance of the country (Abdullahi, 2019).

In Mali, the evolution and development of banditry have been related to religious extremism by sectarian religious groups but further aggravated by weak state institutions as it relates to service delivery. According to United Nation Office for West Africa and the Sahel report (2018), weak state institutions, insurgency, and lawlessness have pushed more pastoralists into religious extremism, leading to rising in bandits' activities in northern Mali. The frequency of bandits' activities has created tensions between farmers and herders as well as exacerbated the proliferation of armed groups in different regions of Mali (Abdullahi, 2019).

However, in Mauritania, trans-border banditry by the local groups as well as challenges relating to resource management and distribution of pastoralists' lands explains the nature and pattern of rural banditry in the country. Unlike Mali and Niger, competition over resources, particularly water resources, pasture, and animal feeds led to a rapid increase of banditry in Mauritania (UNOWAS, 2018). Similarly, livestock theft is becoming a trans-border criminal activity affecting movement and relations along Burkina Faso and Ghanaian border. Local bandit groups mostly Burkinabe connived with traditional elites to rustle livestock and share the proceeds of their criminality (Abdullahi, 2019).

In Nigeria, it is pertinent to note that banditry is not novel. Anecdotal and scholarly accounts have it that the phenomenon predated Nigeria's emergence as a political entity. In this regard, Jaafar (2018) opines that there were recorded instances of banditry in the colonial Nigeria as far back as the 1930s. Putting this claim in a sort of historical perspective, Jaafar explains:

In those days, wayfarers and merchants travelling along our local economic roads usually faced the threats and dangers of ambush from nondescript bandits. Armed bandits and criminals were known to be targeting goods ferried on the back of donkeys, camels and ox carts. Those bandits on our trade routes would forcefully take those goods and disappear into the bush. That is just one dimension of the problem then. In other instances, the bandits would sometimes raid farming communities and villages with the intent of willful killing and wanton destruction of property. During such raids, the bandits would destroy virtually everything in their path, including valuables, farm produce, etc. This subculture has been in existence even before the coming of colonialists to the territories of northern Nigeria (Jaafar, 2018, p.2).

In reference to the northwestern Nigeria, The Humanitarian (2018) avers that the region has a long history of banditry. The first recorded case occurred somewhere between western Hausaland and the Niger border in 1901, when a 12,000 strong camel train laden with assorted grains was attacked and 210 merchants killed. Although banditry is as old as Nigeria, it has nevertheless gradually transformed in scope and dimension overtime from its rudimentary phase, as affirmed by the foregoing Jaafar's citation, to a more complex and complicated pattern of criminality (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2015; Egwu 2016).

The modern transformation of banditry could be understood against the backdrop of the prevailing security dialectics in Nigeria. Accordingly, gangs of criminal, often youth from farming and herding communities and/or local bandits, take advantage of the growing insecurity, fear and cyclical attacks to loot villages, engage in highway robbery, and rustle cattle for personal gain. Both farming and herding communities often suffer from this criminality (Bagu and Smith, 2017; Okoli & Ugwu, 2019).

Factors Promoting Banditry in Nigeria's Northwest Region

Several factors have been adduced as the driving forces of banditry in Nigeria and most especially in the northwest region of the country. Drivers of banditry in northwestern Nigeria consist in some socio-existential conditions that characterise the interior as well as the frontiers of the region. Prominent among these conditions are the scarcely governed spaces- the hinterlands, forestlands and borderlines of the region. The northwestern hinterlands are marked by extremely dispersed rural settlements, separated by rangelands and farmlands that are susceptible to violent contestations (Gaye, 2018).

They are also interspersed by diverse forested landscapes, some of which are dotted by wetlands, rocks and caves. Apart from being separated from each other, they are equally far separated from the centers of governance at the local and state levels. The forestlands of the region are vast, rugged and hazardous. Most importantly, they are grossly under-policed to the point that makes them conducive for all forms of jungle criminality. In view of this, violent crimes, such as banditry, have festered and thrived in such forested areas. Most attacks occur in remote villages, close to forested regions in the north-west where there is little security presence (Gaye, 2018).

In likewise manner, banditry occurs in large swathes of forest reserves that are generally out of the reach of the Nigerian security operatives. Most of the bandit activities take place in state-owned reserves such as the Kamuku, Kiyanbana, and Fagore forests in Northern Nigeria. The forests offer perfect locations as hide outs for the criminals to evade arrest from security forces. The reluctance of the Nigerian security operatives to enter these forest areas seems to be largely due to inefficiency, connivance of the local people, lack of sophisticated equipment and poor motivation of the Nigerian security forces (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016).

Another factor that promotes banditry in Nigeria is the high level of unemployment rate. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2019 puts Nigeria's unemployment rate at 23.1%, of which youth unemployment is 55.4%. Equally, the poverty index in the Northwest is 77.7% (NBS, 2012; Rosenje & Moliki, 2016). These figures have continued to drastically increase yearly as Nigerian institutions keep graduating batches of youths with the prior impression of getting better jobs and opportunities after graduation (Adegoke, 2019). The anxiety from Nigerian graduates that later turn to

frustration, and then to aggression on the government is what has fuelled the emergence of most of these bandit attacks and security threats in the country (Suleiman, 2017; Mustapha, 2019).

Furthermore, Kilishi, Mobolaji, Usman, Yakubu and Yaru (2014 as cited in Abdulkabir, 2017) canvassed that the rising wave of crime in Nigeria has been blamed on the increasing level of unemployment. Thus, the idle youths tend to engage in illegal activities in order to meet up with contemporary trends. Suffice to say that the youths easily get enticed to riches as a result of the prevailing “get rich quick syndrome” that pervade the country. Hence, they tend to do whatever it takes to get rich quick. Therefore, the Nigeria’s high rate of unemployment, especially the increasing rate of youth’s unemployment is what majorly prompts the jobless youths in the country to resort to violent crime like banditry (Adagba, Ugwu, & Eme, 2012; Epron, 2019).

There is no gain saying the fact that weak security system complements the alarming rate of banditry in the northwest region of Nigeria. This could have possibly been caused by the inadequate equipment for the security arm of government, both in weaponry and training (Achumba, Ighomereho, & Akpor-Rabaro, 2013). This is in addition to poor attitudinal and behavioural disposition of security personnel. In many cases, security personnel assigned to deal with given security situations lack the expertise and equipment to handle the situations in a way to prevent them from occurring. Even when these exist, some personnel get influenced by ethnic, religious or communal sentiment and are easily prejudiced by their personal interest to serve their people, rather than the nation (Achumba, Ighomereho, & Akpor-Rabaro, 2013). Thus, instead of being national watch dogs and defending national interest and values, and protecting people from being harmed by criminals, they soon become saboteurs of government efforts, by supporting and fuelling insecurity through either leaking vital security information or conniving with criminals to acquire weapons or to escape the long arm of the law (Offem & Ichoku, 2015).

Moreover, poverty as well poor governance contributed significantly to the rising wave of banditry in Nigeria. Adeolu (2018) noted that the failure of successive administrations in Nigeria to address the challenges of poverty bedeviling the nation has made life burdensome and only the fittest survive. In concurrence with Adebayo (2018) perception, Adeolu, (2018) noted that Nigeria has overtaken India as the country with the largest number of people living in extreme poverty, with an estimated 87 million Nigerians, or around half of the country's population, estimated to be living on less than \$1.90 a day. Alao, Atere and Alao (2015) linked banditry, terrorism and other criminal acts to poverty. Although not all forms of criminal acts could be linked to poverty, it has been contended that economic deprivation influences people to resort to illegal means of meeting their daily needs. It was discovered that because of the attractive benefits accruing from banditry activity, most people, especially the youths tend to join the bandit gangs in the Northwest of Nigeria (Epron, 2014; Adegoke, 2019).

Another driving factor of banditry in northwestern Nigeria worthy of mentioning is the issue of arms proliferation. There has been an incremental influx of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) into Nigeria from the Sahel since the fall of Ghadaffi’s regime in Libya (Gaye, 2018). These arms and weapons end up in the hands of non-state actors like terrorists, militants and bandits, who use them to terrorise individuals and communities. In September 2018, military troops in joint operations with personnel of the Department of State Service (DSS) arrested two suspected illicit arms dealers along Funtua-Gusau road with 1,479 rounds of 7.62mm (special) ammunition, on their way to deliver the

weapons to armed bandits (Adeniyi 2018). Incidents such as this have been prevalent in the various states of northwestern Nigeria where banditry has become the order of the day (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019).

Dimensions and Recent Incidences of Banditry in Nigeria's Northwest Region

Okoli and Ugwu, (2019) claimed that there are four dimensions of armed banditry which will be adopted for this study. These dimensions are village raids, highway robbery, kidnapping and cattle rustling. Village raids are the invasion and marauding of rural communities with severe casualties on the people. In most village raid, household, shops and markets are looting targets. While some time, it is seen as reprisals attack on a rivalry village (Yaro & Tobias, 2019). The second dimension of armed banditry is highway robbery, which is a phenomenon in the State. This occurred by the interception of motorists with travelers on the various highways along Abuja-Kaduna-Zaria axis (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014).

Kidnapping is a crime committed for ransom. Victims of the crime are often those perceived by the perpetrators to possess money which will be paid as ransom based on individual

socio-economic status. Kidnapping in Kaduna State involves highway-armed abduction whereby travelers are ambushed and abducted by bandits and then taken to a hideout in the forest where their relatives or associates are contacted for ransom payment (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014). The last dimension of banditry in Northwest region of Nigeria is cattle rustling. This is a form of organised cattle theft driven by allied accumulative or profiteering inclinations. In other word, they are criminal gangs engaging in organised rural banditry to profit from livestock theft (Gadzama, Saddiq, Oduehe & Dariya, 2018; Asmau & Abdulrasheed, 2020).

However, the recent reported incidences of banditry which cut across the foregoing dimensions in Nigeria's northwest are presented in the Table 1 below:

Table 1:Recent Incidences of Banditry in Nigeria's Northwest Region

| S/No | Newspaper | Reporter(s) | Dates of Publication | Nature and Place of Attack | Causalities |
|------|------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | The Punch | Gbenro Adeoye | March 31, 2018 | Bandits attacked Bawan Daji village of Anka LGA of Zamfara State and killed over 30 people | Over 30 people were killed |
| 2 | The Nation | The Nation | March 1, 2019 | 21 killed in Kawaye village in Bagega community of Anka LGA of Zamfara State | 16 people were killed and 40 others got abducted |
| 3 | The Punch | The Punch | June 9, 2019 | 25 killed in bandit attacks in Klahu, Tsage and Geeri villages in Rabah LGA of Sokoto State | 25 people were killed |
| 4 | The Punch | Olaide Oyelude | July 4, 2019 | 11 killed in bandit attacks on Kankara and Danmusa LGA of Katsina State | 11 people were killed |
| 5 | The Nation | The Nation | August 19, 2019 | Four villagers were killed in banditry attacks in Tsayu village of Jibiya LGA of Kastina State | Death of 4 villagers |
| 6 | The Punch | Maiharaji Altine | January 17, 2020 | Zamfara bandit kill 31 persons in attacks at Babban Rafi Village in Gummi LGA and Makosa Village in Zurmi LGA of Zamfara State | Death of 31 persons |
| 7 | Nigerian Tribune | Muhammed Sabiu | March 2, 2020 | Bandits kill 50 people in villages in Igabi and Giwa LGA of Kaduna State | 50 people were killed while |

| | | | | | |
|----|------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | | | several others injured |
| 8 | The Punch | Olaide Oyelude | April 20, 2020 | Bandits kill 47 villagers in multiple attacks on Kurechin Atai, Kurecin Giye, Kurechin Duste, Makauwachi and Daule Villages in Kastina State | A total of 47 people were killed in all the villages |
| 9 | The Nation | AbdulGafar Alabelewe | April 24, 2020 | Bandits kill seven and kidnap one in Akwunakwo, Kabirasha and Damba villages in Chikun LGA of Kaduna State. | 7persons were killed and 1 person was kidnapped |
| 10 | Nigerian Tribune | Muhammad Sabiu | May 6, 2020 | 5 killed and DPO shot in multiple bandit attacks at Faskari and Sabuwa LGA of Kastina State | 5 people were killed, 1 was kidnapped and DPO was shot |
| 11 | The Punch | Maiharaji Altine | May 20, 2020 | Bandits kill 12 in attack on three communities in Tsafe LGA of Zamfara State | Death of 12 people and cart away animals |
| 12 | The Punch | Maiharaji Altine | June 5, 2020 | Bandits kill 21 people in Maru and Talata-Mafara LGA of Zamfara State | Death of 21 people |
| 13 | The Nation | Justina Asishana | June 25, 2020 | Four feared killed in Sunko, Gavya and Marafa communities in Manta District of Shiroro LGA of Niger State | Death of 4 persons |
| 14 | The Nation | Justina Asishana | July 21, 2020 | 16 persons kidnapped in bandit attacks in Magani and Tungan-Bajo communities of Rafi LGA, Niger State | 16 persons were kidnapped |
| 15 | The Nation | AbdulGafar Alabelewe | July, 26, 2020 | Bandits kill 10 in two attacks on 3 villages of Jema'a and Kaura LGA of Kaduna State | 10 persons were killed |
| 16 | The | Olaide | August 9, | Eight bandits, two others | Death of 2 |

| | | | | | |
|----|----------|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Punch | Oyelude | 2020 | killed after bandit attacks on Zamfarawa village in Batsari LGA of Kastina State | villagers and 8 bandits |
| 17 | Vanguard | Vanguard | September 4, 2020 | Bandits kill 22 people, including 19 vigilantes in Dukku and Kagara towns, Niger State | 22 people were killed |
| 18 | Vanguard | Ibrahim HassanWu go | September 13, 2020 | Bandits abduct 16 family members at Udawa farming community of Kaduna State | 16 people were abducted |
| 19 | Vanguard | Ibrahim HassanWu go | September 18, 2020 | Bandits invade Police Station in Tangaza LGA of Sokoto State | DPO and 1 Inspector were killed and 2 women abducted |
| 20 | Vanguard | Wole Mosadomi & Shehu Danjuma | October 12, 2020 | Bandits kill 14 persons in Ruwan Godiya village of Faskari LGA of Kastina State and Kagara town of Rafi LGA of Niger State Bandits kill Southern Kaduna District Head and son | 14 people were killed, 3 injured and 1 kidnapped Death of 2 people |
| 21 | Vanguard | Ibrahim HassanWu go | November 17, 2020 | Bandits kidnap 8 ABU students on the Kaduna-Abuja road Bandits kill Southern Kaduna District head and son at Gidan Zaki, Zangon Kataf LGA | 8 Students were kidnapped |
| 22 | Vanguard | Wole Mosadomi | November 20, 2020 | Bandits kidnap 14 and kill mobile policeman in Mariya LGA of Niger State | 14 people were kidnapped and death of a policeman |
| 23 | Vanguard | Ifeanyi Nwannah | November 23, 2020 | Armed bandits kidnap Imam, 17 worshippers from a mosque in Kanoma District, Maru LGA, | 18 persons were kidnapped |

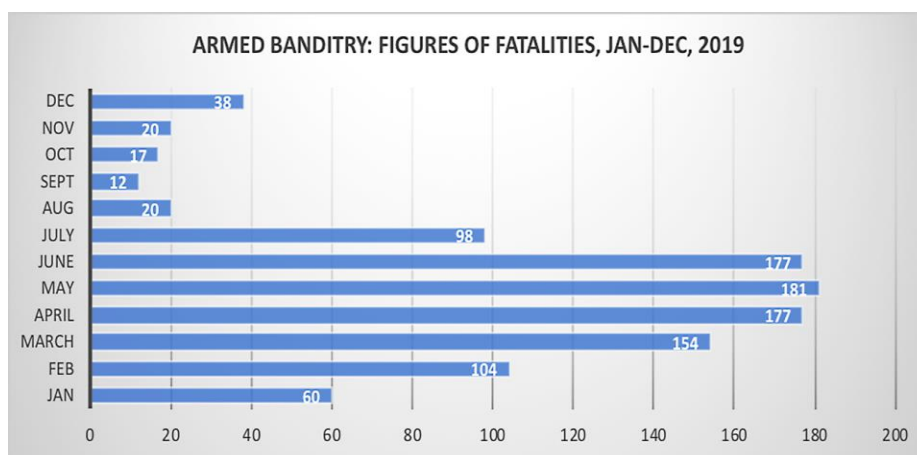
| | | | | | |
|----|------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | | Zamfara State. | |
| 24 | Vanguard | Bashir Bello | December 1, 2020 | Bandits invade Tashar Bama, Dogun Muaze and Unguwar Maigayya villages of Sabuwa LGA of Kastina state | 7 farmers including nursing mother were killed and abduct 30 others |
| 25 | Vanguard | Vanguard | December 5, 2020 | Bandits attack Kasuwan Magani town in Kajuru LGA of Kaduna State | 1 person was killed |
| 26 | Daily Post | Daily Post | December 10, 2020 | Kidnappers raid Pmahbe Layout in Ushafa, Abuja | 3 persons were abducted |
| 27 | The Nation | Uja Emmanuel | December 12, 2020 | Gumen kill four and injure seven in Tse-Angbande in Makurdi LGA of Benue State | Death of 4 persons and 7 person injured |
| 28 | Vanguard | Vanguard | December 12, 2020 | Banditry: Police confirm attack on Government Science Secondary School (GSSS) in Kankara LGA of Katsina state | About 333 students missing |
| 29 | The Nation | Justina Asishana | December 13, 2020 | Bandits kill ECWA Gospel Kubwa Kuta in Chukuba village of Shiroro LGA of Niger State | 1 person was Killed and 20 others were kidnapped |

Sources: Rosenje & Adeniyi's Compilation from Nigeria's Daily Newspapers (2020)

The Effects of Banditry on Nigeria’s Northwest Security

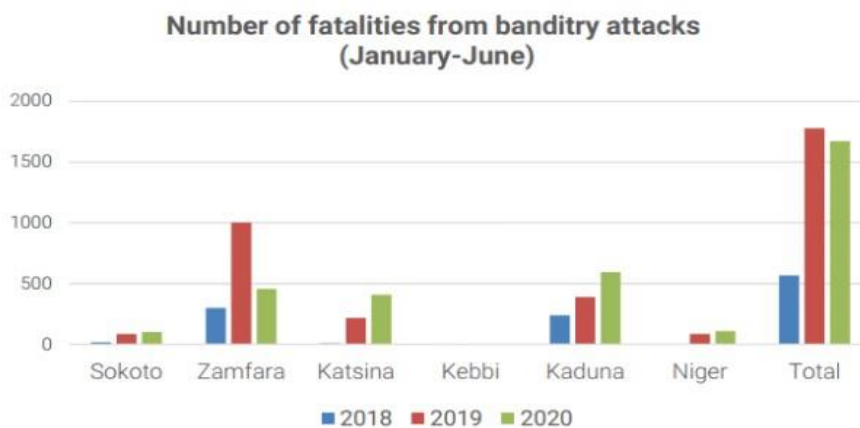
A new wave of crisis emerging in Nigeria’s northwest region with the ongoing activities of armed groups referred to locally as ‘bandits’ in six states, namely Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Kaduna, Niger and Kebbi. Attacks have included shooting and killing, cattle rustling, kidnapping, rape, torching of entire villages, and looting of valuables, and the numbers of fatalities and displaced people have continued to increase. While more than 1,100 people were killed in 2018 in the six states, over 2,200 were killed in 2019, and more than 1,600 fatalities were recorded between January and June 2020 (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020). By September 2019, such attacks had internally displaced over 160,000 people and produced more than 41,000 refugees (World Food Programme, 2019; United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees, 2019). Displacement numbers now stand at over 247,000 IDPs and some 60,000 refugees (Selim, 2020). An overview of the number of fatalities from banditry attacks between January and December, 2019 and January to June, 2020 was presented in Diagram 1 & 2 respectively:

Diagram 1:



Source: West African Network for Peacebuilding, 2020

Diagram 2:



Sources: Council on Foreign Relations, 2020; Chart: ACAPS

Large-scale farming and animal husbandry have been acknowledged to be the main economic activities in the northwest (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020), with trading as an alternative source of income. Most farmers cultivate yams (in Niger state), legumes, beans, millet, tomatoes, and rice (in Zamfara, Katsina and Sokoto) (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020). Targeted attacks on farmers throughout the year have made cultivation and harvest impossible. Bandits have warned farmers to stay away from their farms, and about 26 farmers who ignored this order were killed in Batsari LGA of Katsina state (Orjinmo, 2020). Farmers have been kidnapped for ransom, while bandits in Shiroro LGA have demanded payments of up to \$1,100 before farmers can access their farmlands (Muhammed, 2020).

Cattle rustling have also hampered animal husbandry in these areas. Violence and forced displacement had left affected communities unable to rely on own-produced cereals for subsistence and commercial farming, thus heightening the risk of food insecurity for displaced and non-displaced populations (Anka, 2017). About 70% of the 309,000 IDPs in the northwest have insufficient food, with global acute malnutrition rates among children reported to be as high as 18% and 31% in Sokoto and Zamfara states respectively (WFP, 2019).

In like manner, the over 30.6 million people living in the six affected states face increased protection concerns due to the continued escalation of the crisis. Since 2016, almost daily attacks by bandits have been recorded in Zamfara, Katsina, and Sokoto prompting the Nigeria government to institute various security operations in the northwest. There are risks of getting kidnapped specifically for ransom (Orjinmo, 2020). Women and girls are susceptible to kidnap, sexual violence, and abuse, including rape. As banditry attacks have continued, the affected population has expressed a lack of trust towards the army and police and their ability to prevent the reoccurrence of this ugly development. Residents and survivors in affected states have complained that response from the police and army were slow, and sometimes non-existent when they are attacked (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020).

Thus, banditry by all accounts is undermining security, peace and development in Nigeria's northwest region. While the unfolding crises could be linked to a set of factors, the threat to security in the region already reeling from the effects of a decade-long Boko Haram insurgency in the northwest cannot be over-stated. Therefore, affected communities started relying on local vigilantes for protection as a result. In certain cases, people arm themselves to resist attacks and government's focus on fighting Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast may also be hindering the strength of its response to insecurity in the northwest.

Evaluation of Efforts made at Curbing Banditry in the Northwest

The Nigerian government's response to the security threat has been rather slow and generally reactive. It was in 2014 that a concerted effort started to emerge. One such attempt involved the Nigerian Police Force, under Inspector-General Suleiman Abba, launching the Task Force on Cattle Rustling and Associated Crime. The task force was to be responsible for patrolling and operating in the context of intelligence gathering on anti-rustling and related crimes, in addition to investigating and possibly prosecuting reported cases of such crimes (Yusuf 2015). However, the task force has been relatively inactive since its creation.

By 2015, some governors of northern states also started showing interest in the anti-rustling fight. Between July and October of that year, they held two meetings in which they agreed to pool their resources to fund a joint operation involving the military, the police, the state security service, and the Civil Defence Corps in order to comb the forests that are believed to be havens for cow thieves in the affected states (Binniyat 2015). However, the agreement resulted in more talk than action.

In spite of the seeming failure of the attempts in the foregoing explication, the initiative was effectively put into practice by the Niger State government when it established its own joint patrol, codenamed Operation Sharan Daji. The operation which brings together the military, police, security service, civil defence corps, and local vigilante groups works by proactively engaging with the bandits in the forests. Within a week of its establishment, a total of 118 cows and 23 sheep had been recovered from bandits (Channels TV, 2016). The same method of joint patrol operation was also put in place by the Katsina State government in late 2015.

However, the most innovative response came from the Kaduna State government. The steps include embedding security agents amongst herders to protect them against bandits; tightening state borders to prevent trans-border influx of bandits; and, most importantly, implanting computer microchips in the animals to monitor their movements and prevent armed bandits from stealing them (Jimoh, 2015). The Kaduna initiative, termed the “El-Rufai Model,” represents a proactive and pre-emptive approach by the use of information and communication technology (ICT) (Leadership, 2015). However, it remains a proposal, and nobody knows when it will be implemented.

In addition, in order to alternatively manage the crisis situation, the idea of peace deal and amnesty was initiated between Zamfara State government and the Leadership of these bandits in 2016. The State government, having reviewed the impacts of the cohesive measures especially the use of Military and Mobile Police, came to the conclusion that, the operation has not yielded the much desired result in spite of huge amount of funds expended. Hence, the State government opted for negotiations with the armed bandits with a view to surrendering their weapons to the State government as the best option for ensuring sustainable peace (Tangaza, 2014). The government agreed to their demands and emphasised that, for the amnesty deal to be perfected; the bandits must surrender their arms and should promise not to invade any community while the peace deal lasted. The government also proposed some strategic measures of integrating the bandits back to their communities by providing soft grant for them to commence business as well as bringing some of them closer to the government (Anka, 2017; Mustapha, 2019).

Nevertheless, various state actions have reduced the incidence of bandit attacks and cattle rustling for some times. On several occasions, thousands of cattle have been recovered and returned to owners. For example, as of 7 March, 2016 the joint patrol team put in place by the Katsina government had recovered 12,000 cattle within a few days of operation (Elazeh 2016). In addition, a number of bandits have been arrested and prosecuted. The security forces have also been able to invade some of the rustlers’ hideouts, with the aid of the military forces (Godwin 2016; Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016).

Conclusion

The paper examined the impact of banditry on Nigeria’s security focusing on the northwest region of the country. The paper started with a general review of the issue of banditry from its inception. The paper deduced that the menace of banditry is becoming worrisome as result of high level of unemployment, weak security system, poverty, porosity of Nigeria’s borders, arms proliferations and the presence scarcely governed spaces which serve as hideouts to the bandits. Consequently, the paper reveals that there have been high incidences of banditry attacks on farm settlements, villages, highways resulting in kidnapping and cattle rustling in the region with attendant security challenges. The paper thus concluded that Nigeria security has been quite tense and volatile in the northwest due to the alarming rate of banditry with the attendant massive plundering and carnage, which has plunged the region into a state of insecurity in all spheres of life.

Recommendations

In order to squarely deal with the menace of banditry in northwest region and Nigeria at large, the following recommendations are made:

- (1) Nigerian government should strategise to create meaningful employment for the youths trapped in the phenomenon through the creation of programmes which aim at addressing the endemic poverty in the northwest in particular and the country in general.
- (2) Nigeria government should sustain the military efforts in prosecuting the war against banditry as well as equip the security forces with both types of modern equipment and necessary incentives to enable them carry out their duty without hindrances.
- (3) There should be re-orientation to inculcate ethical values and reverence for life and human right in the people and also the need to co-exist irrespective of religious or ethnic inclinations.
- (4) Government at all levels should put in place functional security system like community policing to supplement the operations of other security agencies as well as the need for proper orientation of the Nigerian security personnel on the need to maintain peace and order in collaboration with the local vigilante. The local vigilante understands the terrain of their communities/environment better than the newly posted police officers from other states.
- (5) Government should intensify efforts to mobilise financial and human resources to fund disarmament, and de-radicalisation programmes to curtail the problems of arms proliferation across the region.
- (6) There should be adequate supply and installation of modern technology as well as increased surveillance while border security personnel are urgently required to check trans-border crimes, which are part of the igniting factors accentuating banditry in Nigeria.

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