

THE CHALLENGES OF CURBING BANDITRY IN KATSINA AND ZAMFARA STATES

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the challenges of curbing banditry in Katsina and Zamfara States in Dutsin-Ma, Musawa, and Faskari LGAs of Katsina State and Bungudu, Maradun and KauranNamoda LGAs in Zamfara State from 2015 to 2023. Employing the social structural conflict theory as its theoretical framework, the study explains the structural weaknesses facilitating its persistence. The finding revealed that underfunding, logistical constraints, mistrust between public and security agents, lack of sophisticated weapons, activities of undercover agents (informants), inaccessible terrain, among others were the major challenges undermining war on banditry, both in Katsina and Zamfara States. However, the study recommended strengthening community-based intelligent networks, enhancing inter-agency coordination and information sharing.

Keywords: Challenges, curbing, banditry, Katsina and Zamfara States.

Introduction

Background to the Study

Banditry, as a form of organised or semi-organised violent crime, has deep historical roots across different regions of the world and has evolved in response to socio-economic and political conditions. In pre-modern Europe, banditry was often associated with feudal instability, weak central authority, and widespread poverty. Groups of outlaws, sometimes romanticised in folklore, operated in forested and mountainous regions, engaging in robbery, extortion, and at times acting as proto-rebels against oppressive elites (Hobsbawm, 1969).

Similarly, in the Ottoman, Turkish context, banditry emerged in the form of irregular armed groups who exploited the decline of imperial control in peripheral regions.

These groups often thrived in rural Anatolia and the Balkans, where administrative weakness and economic hardship created fertile ground for criminal insurgency (Barkey, 1994).

In Latin America, banditry has historically been linked to agrarian inequality and weak governance structures. Rural bandits, particularly in the 19th and the early 20th centuries, operated in areas where state authority was minimal, often positioning themselves as defenders of marginalised populations, while engaging in criminal activities such as cattle rustling, kidnapping, and armed robbery (Slatta, 1987).

In China, banditry has also been a recurring phenomenon, especially during periods of dynastic decline and political economic transition. Armed groups

frequently exploited rural distress, natural disasters, and corruption, engaging in raids and extortion, while occasionally aligning with revolutionary movements (Perry, 1980).

The Horn of Africa presents another context in which banditry has flourished due to prolonged conflicts, state fragility, and environmental stress. In countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, and parts of Kenya, banditry often intersects with clan-based conflicts, cattle rustling, and insurgency. The porous borders and availability of small arms and light weapons have exacerbated the scale and intensity of such activities, making them a persistent threat to regional stability (Menkhaus, 2007).

In Nigeria, banditry has become a major national security concern, particularly in the North-Western region. Historically, forms of rural criminality such as cattle rustling and highway robbery existed but were relatively localised and less organised. However, since the early 2010s, banditry has transformed into a highly violent and organised enterprise involving mass kidnappings, village raids, and large-scale displacement of populations (Okoli&Ugwu, 2019). The proliferation of small arms, youth empowerment, environmental degradation, and the weakening of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms have contributed significantly to the escalation of banditry in the country.

Katsina State has experienced frequent bandit attacks, including mass abductions of school children, which have drawn national and international attention. The phenomenon is deeply rooted in the rural and agrarian structure of Katsina State. Most victims are farmers, herders, and villagers whose livelihoods depend on land and livestock. As a result, bandit attacks frequently disrupt agricultural activities,

destroy crops and lead to the loss of livestock. Many communities have been forced to abandon their homes and farmlands due to repeated attacks, creating internal displacement and worsening food insecurity. This makes banditry not only a security issue but also a major economic and humanitarian concern.

In Zamfara State, the crisis is often traced to conflicts between farmers and herders, illegal mining activities, and competition over land and economic resources. These factors have facilitated the rise of armed groups that engage in cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, and attacks on rural communities. However, banditry in Zamfara State is a complex and evolving form of insecurity that goes beyond ordinary crime. It is largely driven by organised groups of armed men who operate mainly in rural areas, particularly from forest zones such as Dansadau forest, (Abdullahi, 2019).

The porous borders of these states particularly with Niger Republic have further complicated security efforts by enabling the movement of armed groups and weapons across territories (International Crisis Group, 2020). The Federal Government of Nigeria has implemented various strategies to curb banditry though with mixed outcomes. These efforts include military operations such as operation “*HadarinDaji*”, “*Harbin Kunama*”, “*DiranMikiya*”, “*Puff Ader*”, the deployment of special forces, and aerial bombardments of bandit hideouts.

Additionally, the government has attempted non-military approaches, including dialogue, amnesty programmes, and the establishment of state-level security outfits. However, these measures have often been criticised for lacking

coordination, sustainability, and adequate intelligence support (Amao, 2020).

Furthermore, challenges such as corruption, inadequate funding, and limited community trust in security agencies have hindered the effectiveness of these interventions. This study is a geographically focused, decade-long case study that centres on Faskari, Musawa and Dutsin-Ma in Katsina State, and Bungudu, Maradun and KauranNamoda in Zamfara States. By focusing on these frontline communities from 2015 to 2023, the research examines the factors responsible for banditry in the affected areas, the relationship between banditry and national security, the effect and the strategies employed in curtailing banditry.

Nigeria has, from 2015 to 2023, witnessed a significant deterioration in its internal security architecture, particularly in the North-West region. The rise of rural banditry has evolved from isolated criminal activities into an organised and persistent threat, posing serious challenges to national security, socio-economic stability, and governance. States such as Katsina and Zamfara have emerged as epicenters of this crisis, experiencing widespread violence, economic disruption, and humanitarian distress. (West Africa Network for Peace-building, 2022)

In Katsina State, the impact of banditry has been particularly devastating. Available report from West Africa Network for Peace-building, 2022) indicates that two thousand lives have been lost due to recurring attacks by armed groups. In addition to the human toll, the agrarian economy of the state has suffered severe setbacks, with approximately five hundred thousand cattle rustled, thereby crippling the primary source of livelihood for many rural inhabitants. Furthermore, the destruction of food produce valued at two

billion naira has exacerbated food insecurity and deepened poverty levels within affected communities.

Similarly, Zamfara State has recorded even more alarming consequences of banditry. An estimated ten thousand people have lost their lives as a result of violent attacks, while about one hundred and ninety thousand individuals have been displaced from their homes, creating a significant internally displaced persons (IDPs) crisis. The destruction of approximately four thousand hectares of farmland has undermined agricultural productivity, while cattle worth three hundred million naira have been rustled, further weakening the rural economy and livelihood. Despite various military operations and government interventions, such as “HadarinDaji” “Harbin Kunama”, DiranMikiya, Puff Adder, dialogue and amnesty programmes, banditry persists in these states, raising critical concerns about the effectiveness of Nigeria’s security strategies and institutional responses. The continuous loss of lives, displacement of populations, and destruction of economic assets suggests a deeper systemic problem within the country’s security framework (Blueprint Newspaper, 2019).

This study therefore seeks to examine the relationship between banditry and Nigeria’s national security, using Katsina and Zamfara States as case studies. It aims to investigate the underlying causes, effects, and state response to banditry, as well as assess the implications for national stability and development. The persistence of these challenges underscores the urgent need for comprehensive and sustainable security solution.

Definition of Key Terms and Theoretical Framework

Cattle Rustling: This is the illegal taking or theft of livestock, particularly cattle, from individuals or communities. It is often associated with organised criminal activity and can involve violent confrontations between perpetrators and livestock owners or security forces (Okoli&Atelhe, 2014).

Village Raids: These are violent attacks carried out on rural settlements, typically involving armed groups who invade communities to loot resources, destroy property, and sometimes abduct or kill residents. These raids may be motivated by ethnic conflicts, resource competition, political instability, or criminal intention (Adesoji, 2010).

Food Security: This is a condition in which all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food performances for an active and healthy life. It encompasses four key dimensions: availability (adequate food supply), access (ability to obtain), utilization (proper biological use of food), and stability (consistent access overtime) (Food and Agriculture Organisation FAO, 2008).

Peace: Peace is not merely the absence of violence or armed conflict but a condition of harmonious coexistence characterised by justice, stability, and functional social institutions. In conflict-prone regions of Nigeria, peace implies the restoration of security, reconciliation among communities, effective governance, and sustainable development (Galtung, 1967, Best, 2006).

Kinetic Approach: This refers to the use of military force and other coercive measures, such as armed operations, air

strikers, and direct combat, to neutralise security threats. In Nigeria's fight against banditry, kinetic strategies include military offensives, joint taskforce operations, and the deployment security personnel to affected areas (Onuoha, 2018).

Non-Kinetic Approach: This approach involves non-military strategies aimed at addressing the root causes of insecurity through dialogue, intelligence gathering, community engagement, socio-economic development, deradicalisation, and peace-building initiatives. In Katsina and Zamfara states, non-kinetic measures include amnesty programmes, negotiation with armed groups, poverty alleviation, and strengthening local governance (Eji, 2016; Albert, 2021).

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs): This refers to portable weapons designed to individual or small group use, including pistols, rifles, assault weapons, machine guns, and rocket-propelled grenades. The proliferation of SALWs has significantly intensified banditry in North-West Nigeria by increasing the lethality, frequency, and scale of violent attacks (Small Arms Survey, 2018, Ginifer&Ismail, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

This study used Social Structural Conflict and Securitisation Theories. Thereafter, the Social Structural Conflict Theory is adopted for the analysis in the study.

Social Structural Conflict Theory

Social Structural Conflict Theory is a social legal perspective that explains social behaviours and societal organisation through the lens of inequality, power struggles and competing interest among different groups. Rooted in the work of classical theorists such as Karl Max, the theory posits that society is fundamentally

divided into groups for limited resources, wealth, status, and political power. These inequalities are not accidental but are embedded within the very structure of society, shaping relationships, institutions, and individual opportunities (Marx & Engels 1848/1978; Stephen, 2014:118 & Adetula 2018). The theory emphasized that conflict is not only inevitable, but a driving force for social change.

At the core of Social Structural Conflict Theory is the idea that social structures such as economic systems, legal frameworks, and political institutions are designed in ways they benefit dominant groups while marginalising others. For example, in capitalist societies, the bourgeoisie hold power over the proletariat leading to exploitations and class struggle. The imbalance creates tension as subordinate groups become increasingly aware of their disadvantaged position and seek to challenge the status quo (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018).

Another key aspect of the theory is its focus on power and domination. Power is unevenly distributed across social groups, often along lines of class, race, gender, and ethnicity. Institutions can reinforce these inequalities by promoting ideologies that justify the dominance of certain groups. For instance, educational systems may perpetuate class divisions by providing unequal access to quality education, thereby limiting social mobility for disadvantaged populations (Collins, 2009). In this way, structural arrangements maintain and reproduce inequality across generations.

Social structural conflict theory also highlights the role of resistance and social change. While dominant groups strive to maintain their privileges, subordinate groups may organise and mobilise to

demand for equity and justice. Historical movements such as labour unions, civil rights campaigns, and feminist movements illustrate how conflict can lead to reforms and transformation within society. These changes, however, are often gradual and contested as those in power may resist efforts that threaten their position (Dahrendorf, 1959). Therefore, conflict is viewed not only as a source of instability but as a catalyst for progress.

Methodology

This research is theoretical in nature; it relies on secondary sources of data such as journals, books, newspapers, magazines, and internet outlets.

Literature Review

Scholars have analysed the challenges of curbing banditry, among them are, Abdullahi and Umar (2024) explain that there is a prevailing perception that the Nigerian government lacks commitment to combating armed banditry. Many local communities refrain from providing intelligence to the police and military personnel deployed in their communities due to this perception.

According to them, if you volunteer to provide intelligence to the police or army regarding armed bandits, they rarely take action to prevent attacks. The government's lack of seriousness in combating banditry is evident. They further said that the inability of law enforcement agents to promptly respond to distress calls has fostered reluctance among the populace to cooperate with the government in combating the problem. In some cases, the perceived lack of commitment from law enforcement agencies has created an environment conducive to the emergence of non-state armed actors operating as vigilante groups.

sometimes resort to violence and human rights abuses, exacerbating the security situation.

To scholars such as Adeleke and Oluwaseun (2024), weak governance in Nigeria has continued to manifest in the areas of dwindling capacity of political leaders. However, the political leaders are yet to realise the danger attached to such activities of insurgencies, armed banditry and other menaces, as capable of posing a threat to the unity and corporate existence of the country. Banditry thrives as a result of gross governance deficits. And so, weak governance has been a major obstacle to development and has been impeding the government from responding to pressing challenges in the country.

They also asserted that, bandits' attacks on the military and other security agents in Nigeria are also unprecedented. For instance, they have succeeded in downing an Alpha Jet belonging to the Nigerian Air Force, beating down the military intelligence attacking the Military Officers Training School, and killing some members of the armed forces. In January 2022, eleven security agents were killed in Shiroro and Paikoro local government areas of Niger State. In March 2022, the bandits carried out another dangerous attack on the country's commercial train that was carrying passengers from Abuja to Kaduna which is the major military base of the country. The bandits bombed the moving train with hundreds of passengers on board. In the process, eight passengers were killed; many were kidnapped with an unascertained number sustaining various degrees of injuries.

Accordingly, Utibe, (2025; Rufus, 2025) assert that, armed banditry in Northern Nigeria, particularly in Katsina and Zamfara states, has evolved into a complex security crisis that poses significant

challenges to state authority and human security. One of the foremost challenges is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), which has significantly increased the operational capacity of bandit groups. The availability of these weapons, often linked to porous international borders, enables criminal networks to sustain violent campaigns despite military interventions. Additionally, the transnational nature of banditry, including cross-border movements and arms trafficking, complicates enforcement efforts and weakens national security responses.

Akanji (2025) emphasises that weak governance and limited state presence in rural areas, which creates ungoverned spaces where bandits operate freely. In many affected communities in Zamfara and Katsina, inadequate policing, poor infrastructure, and weak intelligence system undermine effective law enforcement. Scholars argue that the absence of security personnel and poor road and communication network make rural communities particularly vulnerable to attacks, thereby limiting the effectiveness of government intervention. This institutional weakness is further compounded by corruption and lack of coordination among security agencies, which reduces the efficiency of counter-banditry strategies.

Anthony and Ejoka (2025) elaborate that, socio-economic factors also present a major obstacle to curbing banditry. High levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality in North-western Nigeria create a conducive environment for recruitment into bandit groups. Many youths lacking viable economic opportunities, are drawn into criminal activities as a means of survival. Furthermore, competition over natural resources, particularly land and

water has intensified conflicts between farmers and herders, which bandits exploit to sustain violence. According to ResearchGate Study (2025) climate change has exacerbated these tensions by reducing agricultural productivity and increasing migration pressures, thereby fuelling insecurity.

International Review of the Red Cross (2023) reports that, the challenge lies in the complex and decentralised structure of bandit groups. Unlike conventional insurgent organisations, bandit groups often lack a centralised command system, making them difficult to track and dismantle. Their fluid and fragmented nature leads to internal rivalries and shifting alliances, which complicates negotiation and peace-building efforts. This organisational ambiguity also limits the effectiveness of amnesty programmes and dialogue initiatives, as there is no unified leadership to enforce agreements.

However, organisation like Reuters (2026) is of the opinion that the failure of existing security strategies further underscores the difficulty of addressing banditry in Katsina and Zamfara States. Military operations alone have proven insufficient, as bandits often adapt quickly relocating to forested areas and using guerrilla tactics. In some cases, local communities have resorted to negotiating directly with bandits due to lack of trust in government protection, but such arrangements are often fragile and unsustainable. Recent evidence in DomaFaskari Local Government shows that local peace deals frequently collapse, leading to renewed violence and undermining long-term security efforts.

Weak institutional coordination further complicated the fight against trans-border banditry. Security agencies often operate in silos, leading to delayed response times and ineffective conflict resolution

mechanism. A recent policy assessment by Salifu, Yahaya and Ruth (2025) found that overlapping mandates between the Nigeria Custom Service, Immigration Service, and the Nigeria Police Force have hindered joint operations and intelligence-sharing efforts. International cooperation has also been limited despite shared security concerns with neighboring Niger Republic. Bilateral agreements signed in 1919 aimed at strengthening border patrols have yet to yield substantial result due to logistical and bureautic delays.

The failure of the peace deal reached between the Zamfara state government and bandits was attributed to many factors which includes: absence of political will from the side of the state government to implement the agreement it has entered with bandits, non-implementation of rehabilitation and reconstruction measures to bring succour to the victims of the conflict, as well as re-arresting of some members of the bandits by the operatives of the Department of Security Services (DSS) after they have signed the peace deal with state. As states by Ruqaiyah (2023), the peace deal reached between Zamfara state government and bandits was jeopardized after a close associate of BuharinDaji called DogoBangaje was intercepted, arrested and detained by the DSS, other scholars blamed the operation Sharan launched against the bandits by the Nigerian Army as responsible for the fresh violence while others were of the opinion that, as some of the armed bandit leaders heard about huge amount of money being dashed out to BuharinDaji and his camp members plus the juicy appointment by the state government, they decide to establish their own popularity so that their light can be equally be considered by the state government.

Bala and Abubakar (2024) observe that while country's population increases progressively over the years, police manpower is on a decrease and cannot meet up the expected global standard for efficient and effective policing. This glaring shortage made practically impossible for the police force to effectively control and curb the ever-increasing rate of crime and insecurity. In all the frontline Local Government Areas, the number of officers and men of the police force are not more than 30-50 in a divisional police office which is quite inadequate to confront hundreds of bandits in the forests. In fact, in some isolated settlements, near the forests such as Fafara and Shimfida in Jibia LGA, bandits have constituted themselves as authority in which the judge and settle disputes among residents, as most of them have fled to safety. The limited security presence in these isolated areas have created an ungoverned space where the bandits have taken over.

Government, both Federal and State Governments in Nigeria, has been struggling to end the spate of violence and kidnapping in the North-western region. However, as Muhammad, Umar and Ibrahim (2021) observe, in internal security challenges or insurrection, the government in such countries face non-state soldiers who are out to challenge the state institutions and their monopoly of force. Most of these actors in violence have different goals, including overthrowing the existing government, retaliation against social and economic injustice, seeking resource control, and demands for a sovereign state to promote and protect parochial interests, ethnic or religious groups. However, in the case of armed bandits who have been carrying out their activities in some North-western states of Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara,

Sokoto and lately Kano, Jigawa and the Kebbi States are not an organized group with a centralised command of authority like terrorist organisations, rebels or drug cartels. There are bands, each operating within enclave or territory, but the gangs' leaders are familiar with each and know their sphere or domain of control.

Buttressing the above assertions, the Centre for Security Studies Zurich released a report in October 2013 that showed that half of the global abduction cases in the half of 2013 were carried out in four countries and Nigeria has the highest kidnapping or abduction rate in world. The countries are Nigeria (26%), Mexico (10%), Pakistan, and Yemen (7%). Additionally, in 64% of abductions, ransoms were given before the kidnapped people were freed.

Inter-agency rivalry is another challenge of curbing banditry in Nigeria. Udeoji and Obemba (2025) explain that, inter-agency rivalry in Nigeria involves understanding the complexities of Nigeria's institutional frameworks and the interactions among various security and governance agencies. Nigeria faces significant challenges with inter-agency rivalry that stem from overlapping jurisdictions, power struggles, and differing mandates, all exacerbated by hierarchical rank structures. Inter-agency rivalry in Nigeria often manifests among security agencies. Such as the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF), the Department of State Services (DSS), and other federal and state agencies. This rivalry can lead to inefficiencies in handling security crises, such as terrorism, insurgency, banditry and organised crime. For instance, operation MESA, and the Police-Military Rift: the rivalry between the Police and military that caused disagreement during operations such as operation MESA

illustrates how rank structure plays a role in poor coordination between the security agencies. The military often views itself as the primary force in maintaining order leading to confrontations with police who assert their civil mandate.

Rivalry between security agencies in Nigeria has been the subject of various studies, highlighting operational inefficiencies, inter-agency rivalry, and the impacts on national security. This issue is particularly important in light of Nigeria's multifaceted security challenges, including insurgency, terrorism, communal violence and banditry.

One of the foremost studies examining rivalry between Nigerian security agencies is Akinwumi and Olatunji (2019), which argues that rivalry among the police, military, and paramilitary bodies often undermines effective security provision. Their analysis suggests that historical legacies of distrust and competition for resources contribute to inter-agency fragmentation, which complicates coordinated responses to security threats.

In Nigeria, the military and security forces operate under a strict hierarchical command structure. According to a study by Uzochi (2021), this hierarchy can lead to challenges in rapid decision-making; personnel may be reluctant to present ideas or concerns to superiors, which can stifle innovation and adaptability in high pressure environments. However, the lower ranks can present their suggestions or ideas at a durbar in the military or a lecture in the police when organised. Durbar and lecture are official platforms where commanders and their men interact.

Discussion of Findings

The following are the major findings of the study:

1. The finding revealed that some communities in Katsina and Zamfara States do not perceive banditry as a crime only, but a business in which some politicians, traditional rulers, and security personnel venture in to generate illegal wealth.
2. The finding revealed that there is a strong link between banditry and national security as banditry often characterised by violent criminal acts and disruption of public order, poses a direct threat to national stability. When banditry becomes widespread, it breaks societal norms, contributing to a climate of fear and insecurity.
3. It was also found that banditry has negatively affected agricultural production in Katsina and Zamfara States as many farmers have ceased going to their farms, especially in more remote or frontline areas like Faskari, Musawa, Maradun, and KauranNamoda Local Government Areas, due to risk of violence, kidnapping, or theft. Farmers are sometimes forced to use only short-growing or less risky crops near their villages; taller or more exposed crops are often avoided due to fear of harvest disruption or attack.
4. The finding revealed that underfunding, logistical constraints, mistrust between public and security agents, lack of sophisticated weapons, activities of undercover agents (informants), inaccessible terrain, among others were the major challenges undermining war on banditry, both in Katsina and Zamfara States.
5. The finding also revealed that many parents in Katsina and Zamfara States withdrew their children from schools

while teachers are unwilling to go to rural schools, when posted. This exacerbated the numbers of out-of-school children, and the enrolment rates dropped.

6. Moreso, three hundred and forty-four boys abducted from Government Science Secondary School Kankara on 11th December, 2020 while two hundred and seventy-nine female students were kidnapped from Government Girls Science Secondary School Jangebe, on the 26th February, 2021.
7. Another major finding of this study is the strategy put in place to curtail the menace of banditry in Katsina and Zamfara states has been portrayed as relatively positive. Katsina and Zamfara states have long been known as the epicentre of banditry in the northwest, with bandits often attack communities and kidnap people. However, the two states have explored the significance of reinvigorating the security presence in the volatile areas, through military operations, such as “Operation *HadarinDaji*, Operation *DiranMikiya*”, Operation *Harbin kunama*,” Operation *Puff Adder*” among others.
8. The finding revealed that Katsina and Zamfara states governments have recorded a noticeable decline in such attacks as a result of creation of Katsina Community Watch Corps and Zamfara State Protection Guard. Not only that, the two states governments, precisely under Aminu Bello Masari and Bello Matawalle, have explored significance of truces, As a result of that, some volatile areas have witnessed periods of cease-fire.

Conclusion

The persistence of banditry in Katsina and Zamfara States demonstrates the complex security challenges facing north-western Nigeria. Despite repeated military operations, community policing initiatives, and government interventions, banditry continues to thrive because of deep-rooted factors such as poverty, unemployment, weak border control, illegal arms proliferation, and poor governance in rural communities. The vast forests that stretch across the region also provide safe havens for criminal groups, making security operations difficult and often ineffective. In many cases, inadequate intelligence gathering, corruption, and insufficient cooperation between security agencies and local communities further weaken efforts to combat the menace.

Additionally, the humanitarian consequences of banditry have made the situation more difficult to manage. Frequent attacks on villages, kidnappings, cattle rustling, and displacement of people have disrupted farming and economic activities. Fear and mistrust among residents have devastated the societal social setup.

Recommendations

This study provides recommendation based on the key findings:

1. Strengthening Community-Based Intelligent Networks

Support policies that formalised and integrate local community vigilance groups and traditional leadership structures into state and federal security frameworks to improve early warning systems and responsiveness.

2. **Enhancing Inter-Agency Coordination and Information Sharing**

Recommend the establishment of interoperable communication platforms and joint task forces between military, police, and civil security agencies to reduce duplication of effort and improve operational efficiency in addressing banditry.

3. **Socio-Economic Development as a Preventive Strategy**

Advocate for targeted livelihood programmes in high-risk areas of Katsina and Zamfara – such as youth skills acquisition, agriculture mechanisation, and education investment to address root causes of bandit recruitment and reduce economic incentives for criminality

4. **Legal and Judicial Reforms to Expedite Prosecution**

Propose reforms to strengthen prosecutorial processes for terrorism and banditry-related crimes, including improved evidence handling, witness protection, and specialised courts to ensure swift adjudication that can act as deterrent.

5. **Assessment and Reform of Disarmament and Reintegration Programmes.**

Recommend comprehensive evaluations of existing disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) programmes in the region, and development of outcome-based frameworks that effectively transition ex-bandits into sustainable livelihoods.

6. **Community Trust Building and Human Rights Compliance**

Encourage security agencies to adopt human right-compliant engagement practices and community outreach initiatives aimed at rebuilding trust

between civilians and law enforcement, thereby enhancing cooperation in intelligence sharing and crime reporting.

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