

JOINT OPERATIONS AND COUNTER-BANDITRY OUTCOMES IN KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA: ASSESSING MILITARY AND LOCAL SECURITY COOPERATION

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Abstract

The persistence of banditry in North-western Nigeria has emerged as one of the most significant security challenges confronting the Nigerian state. Kaduna State has remained a major hotspot due to recurring incidents of armed attacks, kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, destruction of property, and displacement of communities. In response, the Nigerian military has increasingly collaborated with local security actors, including vigilante groups, hunters, community policing structures, traditional institutions, and local intelligence networks, to combat banditry. This study assesses the effectiveness of military and local security cooperation in counter-banditry operations in Kaduna State between 2019 and 2025. The paper adopts a qualitative approach based on documentary analysis of academic literature, government reports, security publications, and media sources. Guided by Security Governance Theory, the study examines the mechanisms of cooperation, operational outcomes, challenges, prospects of joint operations policy reports, security briefings, scholarly publications, and operational records. Findings reveal that military-local security cooperation has improved intelligence gathering, enhanced rapid response capabilities, facilitated community trust-building, and contributed to the disruption of bandit networks in

several local government areas. However, operational effectiveness remains constrained by inadequate logistics, poor coordination, mutual distrust, limited training of local security actors, intelligence leakages, and weak institutional frameworks. The study concludes that while joint operations have yielded measurable gains in reducing bandit activities in some areas, sustainable security requires institutionalized collaboration, enhanced capacity-building, community engagement, and improved governance. The paper recommends strengthening civil-military relations, formalizing local security participation, improving intelligence-sharing mechanisms, and addressing the socio-economic drivers of banditry.

Keywords: Banditry; Joint Operations; Military Cooperation; Local Security Operatives; Counter-Banditry; Kaduna State; Intelligence sharing; Nigeria.

1.1 Introduction

Globally, armed banditry is recognized as a form of organized criminal violence characterized by robbery, kidnapping, looting, extortion, and attacks on civilians for economic and material gain. Historically, banditry has existed in various regions, including Latin America, Asia, and Africa; where weak state institutions, poor governance, and socio-economic inequalities create opportunities for criminal groups to flourish. Bello (2021) conceptualized banditry as a pattern of criminality involving violence and terror perpetrated by gangs of outlaws against society. Contemporary studies further argue that globalization, transnational criminal networks, and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons have transformed banditry into a major human security challenge that undermines state authority and economic development in fragile societies (Ojo et al. 2024).

In Africa, armed banditry has become a significant security concern, particularly in the Sahel and Horn of Africa regions, where state fragility, porous borders, environmental degradation, and competition over scarce resources have intensified violent criminal activities.

Armed groups in countries such as Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan, and the Central African Republic engage in cattle rustling, kidnapping, illegal mining, and attacks on rural communities, often exploiting weak governance structures and limited state presence. Scholars argue that the intersection of poverty, youth unemployment, and the proliferation of weapons from regional conflicts has facilitated the emergence and persistence of armed bandit groups, thereby threatening human security, displacing populations, and weakening state legitimacy across the continent (UNODC, 2023).

In Nigeria, armed banditry has evolved into one of the country's most severe internal security challenges, particularly in the North-West and North-Central regions. The phenomenon is characterized by cattle rustling, mass abductions, village raids, sexual violence, and attacks on farmers and travellers. The operational patterns of joint anti-banditry operations are largely influenced by factors such as military capacity, strategic planning, intelligence sharing, and effective operational coordination among security agencies. The effectiveness of these operations is further strengthened by community trust, government support, adequate logistics,

modern technology, and continuous training of security personnel. Consequently, well-coordinated joint operations have contributed to a reduction in bandit attacks and kidnapping incidents, increased the arrest of criminal elements, enhanced public confidence in security institutions, and improved overall human security in affected communities (Okoli, & Ngom, 2024).

Recognizing the complexity of the threat, the Nigerian military has increasingly engaged local security actors, including vigilante groups, community policing units, hunters, traditional rulers, and youth associations. These local actors possess critical knowledge of terrain, social networks, and community dynamics that can complement military operations. Joint operations between military personnel and local security operatives have therefore emerged as a central strategy for counter-banditry efforts in Kaduna State. However, questions remain regarding the effectiveness, sustainability, and overall outcomes of such cooperation. This study examines the extent to which military-local security collaboration has contributed to counter-banditry outcomes in Kaduna State (Abdullahi & Ibrahim, 2023).

The rise of armed banditry could be attributed to factors such as farmer-herder conflicts, weak security governance, poverty, unemployment, environmental pressures, and the proliferation of illicit arms. Banditry constitutes a significant proportion of Nigeria's insecurity and has generated one of the country's worst humanitarian crises in recent decades. The activities of bandits have disrupted agricultural production, caused massive displacement, and undermined socio-economic development and national

cohesion (Osasona, 2022). Military-local security cooperation provide intelligence sharing, joint patrols, community engagement, and coordinated actions, military and local security operatives have collectively contributed to improved security outcomes across several affected local government areas. Yet, the sustainability of these gains depends on institutional reforms, improved coordination mechanisms, enhanced training, technological support, and broader socio-economic interventions (Nwala, 2022).

Kaduna State has face activities of armed banditry due to its strategic location and proximity to forest reserves that serve as hideouts for criminal groups. The state has experienced recurrent attacks involving kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, destruction of property, and killings in communities such as Chikun, Birnin Gwari, Giwa, Igabi, Kauru, and Kajuru Local Government Areas (Akinyetun, 2021). The perseverance of armed banditry in Kaduna has led to widespread shift, disruption of farming and commercial activities, and severe humanitarian consequences. Scholars contend that the complexity of banditry in Kaduna State stems from the interaction of socio-economic deprivation, weak local security mechanisms, and the operational linkages between bandit groups and other criminal networks in the North-West region. Thus, successful counter-banditry efforts require a holistic approach that integrates military effectiveness with human security, community participation, and good governance (James, 2025).

That weak rural security structure, unemployment, poverty, and governance deficits contribute significantly to the

persistence of banditry in Kaduna State. In response, the Federal Government of Nigeria deployed several military operations, including Operation Whirl Punch and Operation Forest Sanity, while simultaneously encouraging collaboration between formal security agencies and local security structures. These arrangements reflect broader trends in security governance where state and non-state actors jointly participate in security provision (Oiza, 2025).

Limited scholarly attention has been devoted to evaluating operational outcomes arising from military-local security partnerships. Furthermore, concerns regarding accountability, intelligence leakages, operational coordination, and community trust continue to challenge joint operations (Okoli, & Chukwuma, 2022).

The absence of comprehensive empirical assessments creates a knowledge gap regarding the actual contribution of local security actors to counter-banditry efforts. This study seeks to address this gap by assessing military and local security cooperation and its implications for counter-banditry outcomes in Kaduna State.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Banditry is a recurring attacks involving kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, destruction of property, and killings in communities. The attacks result to loss of lives, disruption of businesses, people in fear, farmers left farming activities, displacement of communities to areas not familiar with it, ransoms are paid in millions. Scholars such as Blench (2010), Bello (2021) and Onuoha (2020) have focused on their researches on banditry in

Birnin Gwari, Giwa, Igabi LGA but this paper focuses on Chikun LGA due to insufficient literature on bandits' activities in the area. While military operations have successfully neutralized several bandit commanders and dismantled criminal camps, many attacks persist due to intelligence gaps, difficult terrain, and limited state presence in rural communities (Okoli & Chukwuma, 2022). Similar studies by Sale & Abubakar (2025) and Oiza (2025) on Northwestern Nigeria suggest that weak local intelligence and poor security direction remain major problems to sustainable success. Local security actors have increasingly become critical partners in counter-banditry operations. Yet scholarly understanding of how such cooperation influences operational outcomes remains limited. The central problem addressed by this study is therefore the lack of systematic assessment of the effectiveness of military-local security cooperation in combating banditry in Kaduna State.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What forms of cooperation exist between the military and local security operatives in counter-banditry operations in Kaduna State?
2. To what extent has military-local security cooperation contributed to counter-banditry outcomes?
3. What challenges affect the effectiveness of joint operations against banditry?
4. How can military-local security cooperation be strengthened to enhance sustainable security in Kaduna State?

1.4 Conceptual Clarifications

Joint Operations

Joint operations refer to the planned and coordinated military and security activities conducted by two or more security agencies or forces working together to achieve a common security objective. These operations involve the integration of personnel, intelligence, resources, and strategies to effectively address security threats that cannot be handled by a single agency. In Nigeria, joint operations typically involve cooperation among the military, police, intelligence agencies, and local security operatives such as vigilantes, hunters, and the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). These operations are often undertaken to combat banditry, terrorism, kidnapping, cattle rustling, and other forms of organized crime. Key features of joint operations include: Joint planning and decision-making; Intelligence sharing and coordination; Combined patrols and raids; Sharing of logistics and resources; Unified command and communication mechanisms. Joint operations are the coordinated employment of personnel, capabilities, and resources of multiple security agencies to achieve common security objectives and improve operational effectiveness against security threats. Joint operations are security missions in which two or more security agencies work together to fight crime and insecurity more effectively than they could individually (Okoli, 2022).

Banditry

Banditry is the crime of carrying out violent robberies, theft, kidnapping, or attacks by armed groups or individuals, known as bandits, usually in rural or

remote areas where government control is weak. Bandits often rob travelers, homes, or businesses, steal livestock, money, or valuable goods, kidnap people for ransom and use violence or threats to intimidate victims. In some parts of Africa, including countries like Nigeria, banditry has become a major security challenge. Armed groups attack villages, raid farms, steal cattle, and abduct people for ransom. In simple terms, banditry is organized armed robbery and criminal violence carried out by bandits, often targeting people and communities for financial gain (Musa, 2021).

Counter-Banditry

Counter-banditry refers to the policies, strategies, and actions undertaken by governments, security agencies, communities, and other stakeholders to prevent, combat, and eliminate banditry and its associated criminal activities. It involves both military and non-military measures aimed at reducing the activities of armed bandits, protecting lives and property, restoring public safety, and addressing the underlying causes of banditry. Counter-banditry measures may include military operations and joint security patrols; Intelligence gathering and information sharing; Community policing and vigilante participation; Protection of vulnerable communities; Disarmament and rehabilitation programmes; Socio-economic interventions such as job creation and poverty reduction. In the context of Kaduna State and other parts of Nigeria, counter-banditry involves collaborative efforts between the military, local security operatives, government agencies, and communities to suppress bandit attacks, reduce kidnapping and cattle rustling, and enhance human

security. Counter-banditry is the coordinated effort to prevent, control, and eradicate banditry through security operations and community-based interventions (Aina, 2024).

Local Security Operatives

Local security operatives are community-based or indigenous security personnel and groups that assist formal security agencies in maintaining law and order, gathering intelligence, protecting communities, and combating crime and insecurity at the local level. They usually possess extensive knowledge of the local terrain, culture, and inhabitants, which makes them valuable partners in addressing security challenges. In the context of Nigeria, local security operatives include groups such as Community Vigilante Groups; Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF); Hunters' Associations; Community Protection Guards; Neighbourhood Watch Groups; KADVIS (Kaduna Vigilance Service) in Kaduna State. These operatives often work alongside the military, police, and other formal security agencies by providing intelligence, participating in patrols, identifying suspects, and helping to protect lives and property. Local security operatives are community-based security personnel who support formal security agencies in maintaining peace and combating crimes such as banditry, kidnapping, and cattle rustling within their local communities (Sale., & Abubakar, 2025).

Security Cooperation

Security cooperation refers to the collaborative efforts and coordinated actions among security actors, government institutions, communities, or countries to prevent, manage, and respond to security

threats and enhance peace and stability. It involves sharing resources, intelligence, expertise, and responsibilities to achieve common security objectives. The context of counter-banditry in Nigeria, security cooperation often involves collaboration between the military, police, local security operatives, intelligence agencies, and community groups. Such cooperation may include: Intelligence and information sharing; Joint planning and operations; Coordinated patrols and surveillance; Training and capacity building; Sharing logistics and resources; Community engagement and trust-building. Security cooperation between the military and local security operatives in Kaduna State has been used to improve intelligence gathering, enhance operational effectiveness, and reduce bandit attacks in affected communities. Security cooperation is the process by which different security actors work together by sharing information, resources, and responsibilities to address security challenges and maintain peace and security (Umar et al. 2024).

1.5 Theoretical Framework

Security Governance Theory

Security Governance Theory provides a useful framework for understanding military-local security cooperation. The theory argues that security provision is no longer the exclusive responsibility of the state but increasingly involves multiple actors operating across formal and informal institutions. The core assumptions of the security governance theory are security is a shared responsibility between formal and informal security outfits. State monopoly of force is increasingly

challenged. Collaboration enhances security effectiveness. Local actors have valuable security resources. Major drivers include poverty, youth idleness, weak governance, climate stress, arms spread, resource conflicts, porous borders these factors create recruitment opportunities for armed groups (Krahmann, 2003).

According to security governance scholars, contemporary security challenges require collaborative approaches involving state agencies, communities, and non-state actors. Effective governance emerges when these actors coordinate resources, information, and operational capabilities toward shared objectives. The theory is relevant because it recognizes the role of community actors in security provision. It explains the importance of intelligence-sharing by emphasizes collaborative responses to complex security threats through providing a framework for assessing operational effectiveness. The theory therefore offers an appropriate lens for analyzing military-local security cooperation in counter-banditry operations in Kaduna State.

1.6 Methodology

The paper adopted case study qualitative research design. Kaduna State, Nigeria is the study area. The study used secondary sources of data from Military reports, Government white papers, Journal articles, NGO reports and Newspaper archives. The data was analysed through content analysis using themes and patterns.

1.7 Review of Related Literature

1.7.1 Banditry and Insecurity in North-western Nigeria

The roots of banditry in Northwestern Nigeria can be traced to a combination of historical, socio-economic, environmental, and governance-related factors. Historically, rural communities across the region depended heavily on agriculture and livestock production as primary sources of livelihood. However, increasing population growth, environmental degradation, desertification, and climate change have intensified competition over scarce resources, particularly land and water (Sale, & Abubakar, 2025). These pressures contributed to recurring conflicts between farmers and pastoralists, many of which gradually evolved into organized criminal activities (Umar et al. 2024).

According to Akinyetun (2021), the breakdown of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, coupled with weak state presence in rural areas, created opportunities for armed groups to exploit local grievances and establish criminal networks. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons further exacerbated the security situation. Porous international borders and regional conflicts facilitated the circulation of weapons, enabling criminal groups to acquire sophisticated firearms. Over time, cattle rustling transformed from a subsistence-related activity into a lucrative criminal enterprise linked to broader networks of organized crime (Bello, 2021).

Kaduna State became particularly vulnerable due to its geographical location and extensive forest reserves. Forest complexes in Birnin Gwari, Giwa, Chikun,

Kachia, and neighboring areas provided strategic hideouts for armed groups. These forests offered protection from security operations while facilitating movement across state boundaries. Several studies have linked the rise of banditry to governance deficits, poverty, unemployment, environmental pressures, and weak state presence (Blench, 2010; Akinyetun, 2021). The transformation of cattle rustling into organized criminal enterprises has further intensified insecurity. Okoli and Chukwuma (2022) argue that banditry has evolved into a complex security challenge involving transnational criminal networks and sophisticated weapon systems. Similarly, Onuoha (2020) identifies weak border control and state fragility as major enablers of bandit operations.

1.7.2 Military Responses to Banditry

The Nigerian military has launched multiple operations targeting bandit groups across Northwestern Nigeria. Operations such as Operation Whirl Punch and Operation Forest Sanity have achieved tactical successes through offensive actions against bandit enclaves. However, scholars argue that military operations alone have produced limited long-term outcomes due to insufficient local intelligence and community cooperation. military-local security cooperation has become an indispensable component of counter-banditry operations in Kaduna State. The effectiveness of joint operations is reflected in enhanced intelligence gathering, improved operational outcomes, increased community participation, and the disruption of criminal networks operating across affected local government areas. Between 2019 and 2025, Kaduna State recorded numerous incidents of bandit

attacks, including mass kidnappings, attacks on villages, destruction of property, and targeted killings (Ojo, 2024). The severity of these incidents prompted both federal and state authorities to adopt more aggressive security measures. Military operations were intensified, aerial surveillance increased, and intelligence-driven interventions became more prominent (Bello, 2021).

The growing emphasis on military-local security cooperation reflects an acknowledgment that sustainable security cannot be achieved through military force alone. However, effective security organization requires partnerships between formal establishments and community-based actors capable of addressing both immediate threats and underlying causes of insecurity. However, the persistence of attacks despite these efforts highlighted the need for alternative approaches. Local security actors increasingly emerged as important partners in security management due to their familiarity with local terrain and social networks. Their involvement represented a shift toward collaborative security governance aimed at leveraging local knowledge and community participation (Nwala, 2022).

1.7.3 Military–Local Security Cooperation as a Force Multiplier

Civil-military cooperation has gained prominence in contemporary security operations. Ebo (2007) argues that successful security governance depends on partnerships between formal and informal actors. Studies suggest that cooperation enhances intelligence quality, improves operational planning, and increases community trust. Though, challenges such as inadequate training, human rights

concerns, poor command structures, and competition for authority can undermine effectiveness. The most significant force multiplier is the local security operatives' function counter-banditry operations. Force multiplication occurs when collaboration increases the effectiveness of security operations beyond what formal security institutions could achieve independently. Aning & Bah (2020) found that local security actors contribute: local intelligence, terrain familiarity, community trust, early warning information and tracking capabilities.

Military personnel provide tactical expertise, firepower, logistics, operative planning and air support. The interaction between these capabilities creates operational synergies that enhance counter-banditry outcomes. Krahmann, 2003, argues that current security provision increasingly involves cooperation among multiple actors rather than exclusive reliance on state institutions. For instance, Birnin Gwari and Giwa LGAs consistently reported that many successful operations depended on information provided by hunters and vigilante groups who possessed intimate knowledge of forest routes and criminal hideouts. The implication is that local actors are no longer peripheral participants but strategic partners in security governance. Community security structures have historically played important roles in local conflict management and crime prevention. Baker (2008) opined that community-based security institutions often possess superior local knowledge and social legitimacy. Joint operations in Kaduna State, vigilante groups and hunters provide intelligence on bandit movements, hideouts, and logistical networks.

Abdullahi and Ibrahim (2023) observe that local actors serve as force multipliers by supporting surveillance and reconnaissance activities.

1.7.4 Intelligence Sharing and Operational Success

Abdullahi & Ibrahim (2023)& Blench (2010) identified that intelligence sharing as the most important factor influencing successful counter-banditry operations. Intelligence remains the foundation of effective security operations because it enables security agencies to: identify threats, track criminal movements, locate hideouts, anticipate attacks, conduct targeted interventions. Literature emphasized that military operations became more effective when supported by local intelligence. These researchers conducted in Somalia (Williams, 2020), Kenya (Botha, 2014) and Niger (International Crisis Group, 2020). These studies similarly found that local communities often possess information inaccessible to formal security agencies. Local security actors in Kaduna State provide Human Intelligence (HUMINT), information gathered through social interactions and local networks. Terrain intelligence such as knowledge of forests, routes, and geographical features, community intelligence like information about suspicious movements and criminal collaborators. Consequently, intelligence sharing emerged as a critical determinant of operational effectiveness.

1.7.5 Community Participation and Human Security Outcomes

Military-local security cooperation enhances community participation in security governance. Traditional security approaches often depict communities as

passive recipients of security services. However, this study demonstrates that communities actively contribute to security through information sharing, surveillance activities, community mobilization, conflict prevention and early warning systems. The literature shows that communities experiencing effective military-local security cooperation reported increased perceptions of safety, greater confidence in security institutions, improved willingness to share information and enhanced resilience against criminal activities. Security interventions prioritize community engagement as a core component of counter-banditry strategies.

1.7.6 Operational Challenges Affecting Joint Security Cooperation

Despite the positive outcomes, the study identified several challenges limiting the effectiveness of military-local security cooperation. Inadequate Logistics such as logistical deficiencies emerged as a major challenge. Many local security groups lack communication equipment, transportation, protective gear and surveillance technology. In some communities, vigilante groups rely on motorcycles and personal resources for operations. This limits their operational effectiveness and exposes them to significant risks. Sensitive information occasionally reaches criminal groups before operations are conducted. Possible sources include: corrupt security personnel, criminal informants and community collaborators. Such leakages undermine operational effectiveness and endanger security personnel. Weak coordination mechanisms, differences in command structures often create operational challenges. Military institutions operate within formal

hierarchical systems, whereas local security groups frequently function through informal arrangements. This disparity sometimes results in delayed decision-making, duplication of efforts, communication breakdowns. Insufficient training most local security operatives lack formal training in intelligence gathering, human rights ideals, conflict management and tactical operations (Onuoha, 2020).

The lack of standardized training and ethics affects professionalism and operational effectiveness. Political interference, it was highlighted political interference as a significant challenge in anti-banditry. Political actors occasionally influence the matter of security appointments, resource allocation and operational priorities. Such interference may compromise operational neutrality.

1.7.7 Counter-Banditry Outcomes in Kaduna State

Many studies suggest that military-local security cooperation has contributed to several positive outcomes. Reduction in bandit attacks following intensified joint operations particularly affected areas include Birnin Gwari, Giwa, Chikun, Kajuru and Kauru. Although attacks have not been completely eliminated, their frequency and intensity have decreased in several communities. There are increased arrests and neutralization of criminal actors. Joint operations facilitated arrests of suspected bandits, recovery of weapons, destruction of criminal camps and rescue of kidnapped victims. These outcomes demonstrate the operational value of collaborative security arrangements.

Joint operations enhanced community trust, communities generally expressed greater confidence in security institutions

when local actors participated in operations. Trust is particularly important because effective counter-banditry depends heavily on community cooperation. Military-local security collaboration in anti-banditry improved human security, personal security, community security, economic activities and agricultural productivity. Where security improved, residents increasingly returned to farming and commercial activities (Sale & Abubakar, 2025).

1.7.8 Human Security Implications and Counter-Banditry

The human security implications of banditry in Kaduna State extend beyond physical violence to encompass threats to livelihoods, food security, education, health, and overall community well-being. Persistent attacks by bandit groups have resulted in loss of lives, forced displacement, destruction of farmlands, disruption of economic activities, school closures, and widespread psychological trauma among affected populations. Consequently, effective counter-banditry efforts must go beyond military offensives and focus on protecting individuals and communities from fear, deprivation, and vulnerability. The findings of this study indicate that military-local security cooperation contributes significantly to human security by enhancing community protection, improving intelligence gathering, facilitating the safe return of displaced persons, and restoring public confidence in security institutions. However, sustainable human security outcomes require a comprehensive approach that combines security operations with socio-economic development, community resilience programmes, youth empowerment

initiatives, and improved governance structures. Therefore, successful counter-banditry strategies should not only aim at neutralizing armed groups but also at creating secure environments where individuals can pursue their livelihoods, access social services, and live free from violence and insecurity (UNDP, 1994).

1.7.9 Impact of Banditry on Human Security in Kaduna State

Banditry has had profound implications for human security in Kaduna State, undermining the safety, well-being, and livelihoods of individuals and communities across several local government areas. The persistent activities of armed bandits, including kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, village raids, killings, and destruction of property, have created an atmosphere of fear and insecurity that threatens the fundamental dimensions of human security (Umar, Haruna, Buba, & Garba, 2024).

Beyond the immediate loss of lives, banditry has resulted in large-scale displacement of rural populations, disruption of agricultural activities, food insecurity, closure of schools, loss of income, and severe psychological trauma among victims and affected communities. The insecurity has also weakened social cohesion, restricted freedom of movement, discouraged investment, and hindered socio-economic development in many parts of Kaduna State. From a human security perspective, the consequences of banditry extend beyond physical violence to encompass economic, food, health, personal, and community security concerns (Bello, 2021; Okoli & Chukwuma, 2022; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1994).

As the United Nations Development Programme (1994) emphasizes, human security entails freedom from fear and freedom from want; however, the persistence of banditry in Kaduna State has significantly eroded both dimensions. Consequently, addressing banditry requires not only military and law enforcement responses but also comprehensive strategies aimed at protecting civilian populations, rebuilding livelihoods, strengthening community resilience, and promoting sustainable development.

1.7.10 Community resilience programmes for Counter-banditry in Kaduna State

Community resilience programmes constitute a critical strategy for achieving sustainable counter-banditry outcomes in Kaduna State by strengthening the capacity of individuals and communities to anticipate, withstand, adapt to, and recover from security threats. While military operations and law enforcement interventions are essential for degrading bandit networks, long-term security requires addressing the socio-economic and governance conditions that facilitate bandit recruitment and community weakness. Community resilience initiatives in Kaduna state such as youth empowerment, livelihood support, agricultural development, education, skill acquisitions community policing, peacebuilding programmes, and early warning mechanisms can reduce the appeal of criminal activities while enhancing local capacities for conflict prevention and security cooperation (Commission on Human Security, 2023).

Furthermore, resilient communities are more likely to provide timely intelligence,

support security agencies, resist coercion by armed groups, and maintain social cohesion during periods of insecurity. In Kaduna State, where banditry has disrupted livelihoods, displaced populations, and weakened local institutions, investing in community resilience can complement military-local security cooperation by addressing the root causes of insecurity and promoting human security. Therefore, sustainable counter-banditry efforts should integrate security operations with community-based development interventions that enhance economic opportunities, strengthen local governance, and build the resilience of vulnerable populations against the influence of armed criminal groups (Norris et al., 2019).

1.7.11 Empirical Studies

Empirical evidence suggests that joint security operations involving the military, police, intelligence agencies, and local security actors have become a central strategy for combating banditry in Nigeria, particularly in the North-West. Ojo (2022) & Umar (2024) consistently report that coordinated operations improve intelligence sharing, operational coordination, rapid response, and the disruption of criminal networks. For instance, Sale and Abubakar (2025), in a survey conducted in Igabi Local Government Area of Kaduna State, found that joint security operations contributed to the neutralisation of bandits, recovery of illegal arms, and reduction in attacks on rural communities, although they also generated unintended socio-economic challenges for local residents. Similarly, Musa and Sarkinnoma (2021) reported that sustained deployment of security agencies in Southern Kaduna enhanced public

perceptions of safety but was constrained by inadequate logistics, insufficient manpower, delayed response, and limited operational equipment. These findings indicate that while joint operations have yielded measurable security gains, their effectiveness depends largely on adequate institutional capacity and continuous operational support.

Beyond Kaduna State, empirical studies further demonstrate the strategic importance of military-local security collaboration in addressing rural insecurity. Aina et al. (2023), in their assessment of Operation Hadarin Daji across North-West Nigeria, found that intelligence-led joint patrols, coordinated raids, and aerial surveillance significantly disrupted bandit networks and weakened their operational capabilities. Likewise, Umar et al. (2024), examining Operation Sharan Daji in Zamfara State, concluded that collaborative operations reduced cattle rustling and criminal activities in several communities but remained constrained by poor intelligence integration, inadequate logistics, and difficult terrain. In addition, Oiza (2025) established that indigenous intelligence generated through traditional institutions, vigilante groups, religious leaders, and community networks substantially strengthened early-warning systems and enhanced the effectiveness of formal security operations. Collectively,

these studies underscore that successful counter-banditry operations depend not only on military force but also on sustained cooperation with local security actors and community stakeholders.

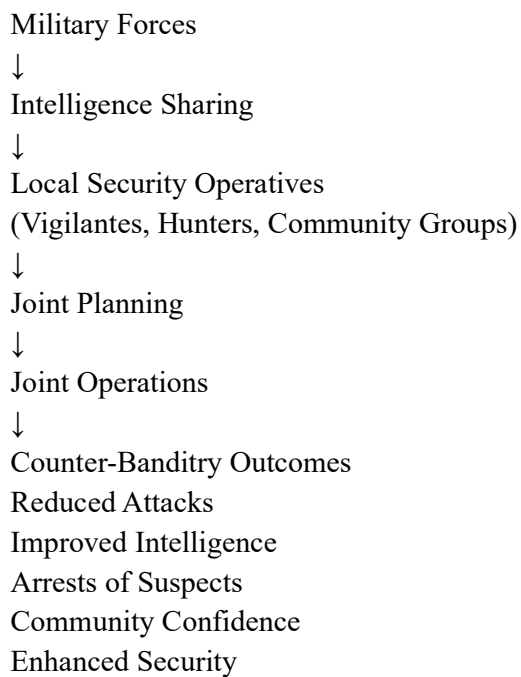
Although existing empirical studies provide important insights into counter-banditry operations, significant gaps remain in the literature. Most previous studies have focused either on the effectiveness of military operations, the contributions of community policing, or regional assessments of insecurity without comprehensively examining how cooperation between military personnel and local security operatives influences counter-banditry outcomes within Kaduna State. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to assessing operational outcomes such as intelligence sharing, joint patrols, coordinated raids, public trust, and inter-agency collaboration within a single analytical framework. Consequently, there is insufficient empirical evidence on the extent to which military-local security cooperation has contributed to reducing banditry in Kaduna State between 2019 and 2025. Addressing this gap, the study empirically assesses the outcomes of joint operations by examining the effectiveness of collaboration between the military and local security operatives in combating banditry in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

1.1 Summary Table of Key Themes, Authors, and Research Gaps

Theme	Author(s)	Major Argument	Research Gap
Banditry	Blench (2010)	Rural criminality and cattle rustling	Limited focus on joint operations
Insecurity	Onuoha (2020)	Weak governance fuels insecurity	Little attention to local security actors
Military Operations	Bello (2021)	Military responses yield mixed outcomes	Limited assessment of cooperation
Community Security	Baker (2008)	Local actors enhance security provision	No focus on Kaduna banditry
Security Governance	Krahmann (2003)	Security is a shared responsibility	Limited empirical application
Civil-Military Cooperation	Aning & Bah (2020)	Collaboration improves effectiveness	Limited Kaduna-specific analysis
Vigilante Participation	Abdullahi & Ibrahim (2023)	Local intelligence supports operations	Insufficient outcome assessment

Source: Researcher computation (2026).

1.2 Conceptual Diagram: Military and Local Security Cooperation on Anti-Banditry



External Factors:
Government Support

Logistics

Training

Community Trust

Coordination Mechanisms

1.3 Interpretation of the Diagram

The diagram illustrates that military and local security operatives' function as complementary actors in counter-banditry efforts. Intelligence sharing forms the foundation of cooperation. Through joint planning and operational coordination, both actors contribute to improved security outcomes. External factors such as logistics, training, and community trust influence the effectiveness of the collaborative framework.

1.8 Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Military-Local Security Cooperation in Combating Armed Banditry

The findings indicate that military-local security cooperation has played a significant role in combating armed banditry in Kaduna State through improved intelligence gathering, joint patrols, and coordinated security operations. The involvement of local security operatives, including vigilantes, hunters, and the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), has enhanced the military's understanding of local terrain and community dynamics, leading to more effective responses to bandit activities. The study further found that sustained collaboration has contributed to reductions in attacks, kidnappings, and cattle rustling in some affected communities, while also strengthening public confidence and community participation in security governance.

However, the effectiveness of these joint operations remains constrained by

inadequate logistics, insufficient funding, poor communication systems, and occasional distrust among security actors. Differences in command structures and weak coordination mechanisms have sometimes undermined intelligence sharing and operational efficiency. Moreover, the persistence of banditry reflects underlying socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and weak state presence in rural areas, suggesting that military responses alone cannot provide a lasting solution.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that military-local security cooperation is an essential component of counter-banditry efforts in Kaduna State, but its long-term success depends on strengthening inter-agency coordination, improving logistical and technological capabilities, and complementing security operations with socio-economic and community-based interventions aimed at addressing the root causes of armed banditry. Kaduna State, several local security operatives complement the efforts of the military and formal security agencies in combating banditry. The major local security operatives commonly involved include Kaduna Vigilance Service (KADVIS), Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), Vigilante Groups and Hunters' Associations (Yan Banga/Yan Farauta).

1.9 Conclusion and Recommendations

Banditry remains one of the most serious security challenges confronting Kaduna State and Northwestern Nigeria. The complexity of the threat requires

multidimensional responses beyond conventional military strategies. The paper demonstrates that military-local security cooperation has contributed positively to counter-banditry outcomes through enhanced intelligence gathering, improved operational efficacy and community participation. However, the sustainability of these gains rest on addressing operational challenges, institutional weaknesses, and broader governance deficits. Effective counter-banditry efforts require a comprehensive framework that combines military capabilities with community-based security mechanisms.

The paper recommends firming civil-military relations, formalizing local security participation, refining intelligence-sharing mechanisms, and addressing the socio-economic drivers of banditry. Government should prioritize the protection of civilians through people-centered security policies. Victims of bandit attacks should receive adequate caring assistance and psychosocial support. Educational and vocational programs should be expanded in banditry-prone communities. Employment opportunities should be created for vulnerable youth populations. Rural development initiatives should address poverty and social exclusion. Standard operating procedures should guide collaboration between military personnel and local security actors. Community policing initiatives should be expanded and adequately funded. Security sector reforms should strengthen accountability and transparency. Intelligence-sharing mechanisms between military and local security operatives should be established. Joint training exercises should be conducted regularly.

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