

## **BANDITORY AND SECURITY THREATS: AN ANALYSIS OF INSECURITY IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract:** *Nigeria has remained a violent-ridden nation in the psycho-political map of the world for a number of decades. To the outside world, poverty, civil disturbances, guerilla warfare, insurgency, diseases, domestic rebellion, terrorism, revolt and in recent times banditry are the core features of the continent, especially Nigeria. Banditry is one of the major forms of insecurity that has affected the northwest geo-political zone of the Nigeria for the past decade. It is against this backdrop that this paper examined banditry and its security threat in Katsina state. Qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were used to elicit and interpret data from documentary evidence of secondary sources. The paper adopted the natural state theory as its theoretical framework. The paper urges that without the security of humans, regional and national security of humans, regional and national security will be difficult to achieve and recommends among others that the federal government as well as Katsina state government should provide sustainable means of livelihood for the youths so as to avoid being easily sway or becoming raw materials for seen threats to human security.*

**Keywords:** *Banditry, Impacts, Insecurity, Katsina State.*

### **Introduction**

Nigerian state is grappling with continuous rising incidences of insecurity, repeated pattern of attacks on individuals and agitations from ethnic cleavages. The indicators of the prevailing insecurity cases in Nigeria include armed robbery, kidnapping of innocent citizens, humans trafficking, religious motivated killings, inter-tribal or communal wars, terrorism, nefarious activities of gangster/cultist, insurgency and banditry. Nigeria's North west is presently suffering deadly conflict involving many armed organizations, including herder-allied groups, criminal gangs and jihadists. The last decade has seen thousands of people killed and hundreds of thousands displaced with many fleeing into neighbouring countries.

Banditry has become a harsh reality in today's Nigeria society; it has come in different forms of manifesting as kidnapping, suicide attacks, self-suicide bombing, insurgency, armed robbery and the life (Adegoke, 2020). Banditry according to Saminas, 2013 cited in Okolie and Ugwu (2019:205-206), is "a crime that has been precipitated and sustained by the prevailing socio-existential environment in the rural sector characterized by a high proclivity to criminal indulgence. In the case of the focal area, northwestern Nigeria, presence and prevalence of under-policed and unregulated hinterlands, forestlands and borderlands have provided an enormous opportunity for rural criminality. The presence of viable but vulnerable rural economy based largely on animal husbandry crop production and informal mining, equally provides and avalanche handy crim objects/targets; cattle, cash, treasure, etc., the virtual absence of governmental security apparatus in most rural communities give incentive for criminal opportunism and impunity. The ecology of crime

bring about not only motivation but also temptation for criminal indulgence. Under this circumstance, criminal deterrence takes flight all forms of predatory crime prevail. This is typically the situation in Northwestern Nigeria especially Katsina where rural marauders and brigands are having a sustained file day in a criminal escapade that is threatening to overrun the entire region. Banditry in the Northwestern states of Katsina, Zamfara and Kaduna has reached alarming heights in recent years. They have actually settled in the Zamfara state, setting up fortified enclaves in the hinterland and on the frontiers, from where they plot and carry out their operations (Okolie, 2019). This study is an attempt to explain the phenomenon of banditry, the dynamism and operating pattern of crime in Katsina State, Nigerian against the backdrop of the rapid upsurge of the incidence in recent times.

## **Methodology**

The design of this research study is quantitative. It employed document review method of data collection with strong reliance on secondary sources including journals, textbooks, magazines and the internet. Data collected were analyzed using quantitative descriptive analysis based on logical deduction.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### *The concept of Banditry*

Banditry according to Okolie and Okpaleke (2014:351), refers to “the incidences of armed robber or allied violent crimes, such as kidnaping, 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 perpetrated by criminal opportunists and syndicates in the countryside and frontiers of countries”. In the view of Kokli (2019:1), banditry is an “armed violence driven principally by the criminal intent to steal and plunder. It is motivated by the quest for economic accumulation and the victims are individuals and communities with material valuables”. Banditry is an “act of robbery and violence in areas where the rule of law has broken down”. It consists of the organization of armed bands for the purpose of attacking state or social institutions on enterprises or individual persons” (Collins, 2000 cited in Ladan & Matawalli, 2020: 439). According to Nigeria Watch (2011), banditry means occurrence or prevalence of armed robbery or violence crime. It has been a common genre of crime as well as cause violence in contemporary societies.

The concept of banditry has “been changing over time, space and circumstances. A bandit in the 19th century. In America and Europe was a freedom fighter whose aim was partly to ensure the emancipation of the downtrodden from the upper class or colonized over the colonizer. More so, bandits like Herachio Bernel and Chuchoel Toto were often celebrated as heroes of Mexican independence. Therefore, Mexicans have warm regards and respect for those ‘social workers’ termed bandits, while on the contrary, the government often considered them as nuisance and outlaws that need to be eradicated” (Michael & Watts, 1989:8). In the context of this study, a bandit is a robber or outlaw person belonging to a gang who uses weapons to steal or rob the people and typically operating in an isolated or lawless area of a country. Rotberg (2007:33) avers that “crime against persons, including murder, rape and robbery has grown in scale and viciousness in

Nigeria since 1999". This has been demonstrated by the pervasive trend of armed banditry in the country, especially in northwestern Nigeria, which in effect mirrors the Africa-wide experience.

The problem of banditry in Nigeria, especially in Katsina state borders on existing over common economic interests and is inextricably tied to farmer-herders conflict. These people often fight over space, the resources therein and survival within the same geographical landscape. Survival instincts and other extraneous factors like ethno-religious differences have contributed to how people who once lived together harmoniously have become sworn enemies and warring communities. It can be safely argued that incidents of farmers-pastoralists conflicts and skirmishes are as old as the evolution of human societies (Oyinloye, 2020). The failure of the government policy on grazing reserve has left Fulani herdsmen to their date in determining where and how to raise their livestock. Amidst this situation, some medium and large corporate livestock farms have emerged while many other Fulani herdsmen maintain their nomadic live styles. The latter live a sort of jungle life, characterized by self-help in the search of grazing field across states trying to protect their lives and properties from wild animals and cattle rustlers. These among other things have led to Fulani herdsmen being armed with dangerous military weapons like AK 47 and other dangerous ammunitions which in turn have led to series of increased bloody killings involving the Fulani herdsmen and local famers in different rural communities across the country (Dutse&Olowoselu, 2020).

The growing threat of banditry is claiming victims in hundreds. Several children have been orphaned and women become widows overnight while the issue of good insecurity as well as humanitarian strategy will further make lie unbearable for many Nigerians. The facts are scary, while about 2,000 people were murdered in 2018 in the six states of northwestern Nigeria in 2018, over 2,200 were killed in 2019 and 1,600 killed between January and June, 2020. About 247,000 people had been displaced while their activities alone have led to the production of more than 41,000 refugees. In Zamfara alone, over 8,000 people have been murdered in the last decade. 200,000 displaced internally and others fleeing to neighbouring states (Okolie&Okpaleke, 2014).

### **Banditry and Insecurity in Katsina**

Farmers and pastoralities skirmishes in Kastina state have recently grown to the level of high criminality and banditry with heavy human and economic costs, sexual assaults of women and girls, attacks on civilian and law enforcement against, attacks on villages and destroy of farm produced. The farmer/herders conflict has traditionally consisted of disputes over natural resources and it is often presented as social conflict between settlers and nomadic people (Olmloye, 2020). Over the few years, banditry has crated widespread insecurity in Nigeria, especially in Katsina state; increased tensions between various ethnic communities, interrupted development activities; inflamed religious tensions; upset the nation's social cohesion and frightened off investors (Maigari et al., 2021). Kidnapping, armed robber, cattle rustling, and lotting constitute breast of national peace and security. Oyinloye (2020) affirms that rural banditry in Katsina state has resulted in wanton killings and destruction of properties. In effect, the incidence and prevalence of banditry in northwestern Nigeria, especially Katsina state raises a fundamental question about the government's ability to govern effectively. The state

security machinery has so far failed to tackle the scourge of banditry. This failure stems from a lack of political will and operational challenges (Okolie, 2019).

The situation is made worse by the absence of effective community policing mechanisms capable of addressing the hinterlands' peculiar security challenges. Importantly, the prevailing socio-existential conditions in northwestern Nigeria have complicated the security situation. The rural pastoral sector is not well regulated, illicit artisanal mining and proliferation of arms and light weapons in the region are veritable factors responsible for banditry and other security challenges, in states such as Katsina, Kaduna, Kebbi and Zamfara, there exists a clan of livestock bandits, who specialize in mass cattle raids (Okolie&Ugwu, 2014). According to Ladan and Matawalli (2020:442), Katsina State with its vast arable lands suitable for both livestock and fisheries, should be a food secure state, but a number of factors have been challenging the attainment of food security in the state. One of those factors is banditry". They further posit that one of the most devastating impacts of banditry in Katsina State is the killing of farmers by the bandits. Other impacts including kidnapping of farmers, seizing of farmlands, blocking of local trade routes, burning of raiding of grain silos, stealing of cattle and chasing farmers out of their farmers.

Oyinloye (2020) avers that preferential treatment, loss of traditional relationship, poor land management and policy, poor management of water resources, bush burning, population increase, crop damage, bigol, ethno-religious factors, hate speech and bandits, lack of voice and political representation are the roots and immediate causes of banditry in Nigeria. In the month of May, 2020, some farmers in Katsina state warned that the resurgence of nefarious activities of bandits if not properly tackled by security agencies and state government would create unprecedented food crisis in the state (Sardauna, 2020). The occurrence of rural banditry is not peculiar to Nigeria. In effect, the phenomenon has been an important facet of the national security debate in the conflict-ridden countries of Africa's Sahara and Sahel. Even beyond the shores of Africa, organized rural banditry has prevailed in places like Latin America where it is often implicated in the morass of drug war. Also, in the far East, rural banditry has been a veritable form of the so-called 'frontier criminality'. It has also been prevalent in the agrarian sector of Sweden within the continental belt of Europe. The common identifier of rural banditry across these climes is its apparent opportunistic and predatory tendencies which has made its occurrence intractable in some cases (Callen, Gulzar, Rezaee& Shapiro, 2018; Gaye, 2018).

However, the Nigerian state has increasingly grossly demonstrated a pathological incapacity to govern. The government at all levels has exhibited a woeful lethargy in dealing with national security emergencies. Therefore, while the menace of banditry subsists, the government has persistently failed to muster requisite political will and commitment to tackle the situation. As Jaafar (2019:3) would like to put it "what we are seeing today is not something that is historically unprecedented. What is new is the incapacity, indifference or unwillingness of the Nigerian state to put the insurgency of rural banditry under its effective control".

### **Payment of Ransom**

According to Maigari, Dantani and Arafat (2021:56), "deducing from the qualitative data, the narrative and submission from the interviews have provided a

contextual explanation for the rising rate of kidnapping for ransom is some part of Katsina. The ransom payment has contributed to the formation of new bands of kidnappers and such money cajoled. Some people into the acts. The findings also indicate that the absence of a mechanism by the security agencies to ensure that release of those in captivity without payment of ransoms is among the factors that contributed to the deterioration of the security situation in the areas. This is related to the conclusion of Brandt, George and Sandler (2016) who concluded that the more a terrorist group receives ransom or concessions from the government, the more the abduction or kidnapping they would initiate new attacks to obtain more gains. In the same vein, the findings have been corroborated by the submission of Shortland and Tom (2017) which observe that when criminals or abductors realized or suspected it is the government that would pay the ransom, there is tendency that they would demand an exorbitant amount of money; because of the belief that government has enough funds in its treasury. Corroborated by financial Actions task force (FATF) (2011:34) report: Money received in exchange for a hostage is found to have a direct effect on the viability of the armed groups to run their affairs and sponsor new attacks and abductions which found to be a major source of budget financing or revenue that finance the budget OAOIM.

The findings revealed that the villages visited could be described as ungoverned spaces, a part from Batsartown which is the headquarters of the local government, area, whereas in the remaining villages there was no presence of government either security personnel or social infrastructure which enabled the armed bandits and cattle rustlers to attack such village with ease, kidnap people, rustle livestock and ransack foodstuff without any assistance from the security operative deployed in Batsari. The findings indicate that armed banditry, kidnapping and the rustling of livestock thrive in the areas because of the absence of government, especially security personnel and social infrastructure which disconnected the villages from urban areas. This correlates with Munyua (2015) finding, which found a relationship between ungoverned space and insecurity in developing countries. Many Africa and other developing countries are face with the problems of ungoverned areas which have now become a haven for the terrorists, armed bandits, insurgent, rebels and kidnappers.

### **Bandit's Modus Operandi, Hideouts and Routes**

According to victims and security experts, armed bandits' attacks were mainly on rural communities. It could be argued that there is no village in Zamfara state that has not witnessed the impact of armed banditry. In carrying out their nefarious act, the bandits use dangerous weapons such as AK 47 Rifles, General purpose machine Gun (GPMG), Double or single barrel guns, Dane guns, local pistols, Machetes, knives and sticks. The attacks in most of the cases result to the wanton destruction of lives and properties at high level of human right violation. They usually strike during the night and in many cases, they attack during the night. In large numbers using motorbikes which give them added advantage as to easily escape immediately before the arrival of the security agent. Hence, the bandits understand the terrain more than the security agents. Some cases, they fire shots sporadically and kill unsuspecting persons indiscriminately before carting away animals, raping women or kidnapping for ransom (Nadama, 2019).

Armed bandits who terrorized villages in Zamfara state perpetrate their criminal act along different routes which cut across different parts of the state and the neighbouring states of Kastina, Kaduna, Niger, Sokoto and Kebbi state. Their major hideout is Subudu forest, the hoodlums pass through Rubudu, Indulmu and Tangila villages to Dandabi forest in Shinkafi L.G.A., Zamfara State. From Dandabi forest, they move to Dumburum forest in Zurmi L.G.A. of Zamfara state. From Dumburum first, the hoodlums may either go eastward towards Shamushalle thick forest in Birnin-Magaji L.G.A. of Zamfara state. At Shamushalle thick forest, the bandis follow Mai jan-Ido forest, through Tsabre forest to ceusami forest. Eastwards towards Batsari forest in Kastina state or westwards to Ajja forest which is another thick forest situated in Mada area development council (ADC) of Ciusua L.G.A from Ajja forest, the bandits move Southwards to Idonaka forest and to Feginmahe forest. From this point, they move eastward heading to Akuzo forest. From Akuzo forest, they move to Danmusa forest in Kastina state. they further move towards CirubinMaikius and Maidabino forest to Zangon-Pauwa forest in Kankara L.G.A. of Kastina State. They move westwards to Yankuzo and HayinAlhaji forest in Tsafe L.G. A. where they burst out at Bilbis/Magazu forest in Tsafe L.G.A. of Zamfara state.

### **Peace Agreement with the Armed Bandits in Katsina**

The governor of Kastina state together with the governors of Zamfara, and the Sokoto states had on August 29, 2010, negotiated with the armed bandits that have been operating the three states. During the negotiation for peace deal, the inspector General of Police also participated in the discussion with some leaders of the armed bandits and kidnapers. Part of the agreement was the release of the armed bandits arrested the security operatives, who the court has not convicted, rehabilitation of rural infrastructure and social services. While on the armed bandits, they are expected to lay down their weapons and discontinue from launching attacks and kidnapping people for ransom and release people in their custody. Between August and October 2019, there was related peace and few incidences of kidnapping in Kastina state (Adegoke, 2020). However, from December, 2019, to December, 2020, the state has witnessed intense attacks on villages, setting houses ablaze and ransacking of properties as well as rampant kidnapping of people in both villages and urban areas particularly in Batsari, Kankara, Danmusa, and Safana local government areas of the state.

Based on the above background, all three bandits stated during IDI sessions that the government was negotiated and signed a peace deal with a segment of the bandits not all. Those who agree with the government has not power to direct or instruct other bandits or criminals who are not under their control. One of the armed bandits Bakiyama village avered that: "Each village has its group and their leaders operate independently but we know members of the band. Therefore, if the government had a dialogue with bandits or those kidnapers in Danusa LGA or Kankara, we will not know what they discussed with the government. Many of the bandits in the forest are not aware of the agreement until after some months". Narrating further, armed bandits in Zamfara village explained that: "The major issue is that the government dialogued with the wrong people. Most of the people invited by the government hardly to operation either cattle rustling or kidnapping. You see, if the field operators are not aware of the ceasefire, how do you expect peace in the areas? Similarly, an armed bandit in Batsari expressed a different perspective of the peace deal

with the government and sated thus: “Like in your band, we have other bands operating in Jibiya LGA down to Zurmu in Zamfara State, but we have not been freed. That is the reason we do not have reason to stop our operation. You have seen out condition here, do you see any social amenities here? Have you seen anything to indicate tis place in in Nigeria?”

It could be deduced from the above qualitative data that he success or failure of an agreement or negotiation largely depends on the selection of appropriate leaders of non-state actors for dialogue. This implies that he majority of the leaders of armed invited by the government were legitimate leaders within their bands alone. Therefore, government and non-government organizations find it very difficult to identify the leaders with a broad sphere of command and authority who can influence the other bands to lay down their arms. This correlates with the findings of Cunningham in identifying leaders of the Syrian rebels for a round table dialogue. The rebels are increasing divided, with splinter groups, each operates independently, the preference on who should be invited for the dialogue or negotiation is a tasking exercise. Similarly, it is also in line with the findings of Baltrop (2008). Ipn Burundi after the negotiations and series of peace task and agreement, it has found that some rebels group refused to submit their weapons to the government.

Additionally, some of the rebel leaders who surrounded their weapons and received money from the government used it to purchase new weapons as a lower price, remobilized surrendered rebels and present them to government to receive their new benefits. Additionally, Felbab-brwon (2020) observe that understanding the context of violence and personalities involved in the violence of war, before going to the negotiation table. Furthermore, Cronin, (2010) negotiated with the criminals does not often lead to an automatic end to violence or criminal activities.

The findings indicate that the government of Katsina state lacked adequate knowledge of the armed bandits organizational structure, operational strategies and leadership. Therefore, understanding the operational matrix and forming the armed bands of kidnappers and cattle rustlers determines who should be invited for negotiation or dialogue to avoid excluding others who may turn to be spoilers. Heger and Jung (2017) cautioned that negotiating with the rebel, spoilers may come up to disrupt the peace process and agreement when they felt they were deliberately or wrongly omitted or not invited to participate in the pace process or people do not have to stake in the violence are involved in the negotiation process. Spoilers tend to take up an arm and continue fighting. Furthermore, Idanis-St John (2008) concludes that negotiation between government and armed groups is one of the most sensitive parts and difficult in the negotiation process.

**Table 1: Selected Bandits Activities/Attacks**

Date and location	Nature of activity or attack
2nd -5th November, 2019 at Chambia and Shekewavillags, Batsari LGA.	Bandits chased out farmers of their farmlands when they went to harvest crops.
17th December 2019 around Jibia dan, Jibia LGA.	Bandits moved on motorcycles on cattle routes passing around Jibia dam
18th December 2019 around Jibia dam, Jibia LGA.	Bandits move on motorcycles on cattle routes passing inside Jibia dam.
1st January, 2020 at Mata Mulki village of Batsari LGA.	Bandits kidnapped 6 teenage girls working on the farm but drop them and fled into their forest hideout.
18th April, 2020 at Makuarachi and Duana of Safana LGA.	Bandits continued reprisal attack in Safana LGA killing 23 people who were farmers.

20th April, 2020 at Sabon LayinGaladimaFaskari LGA.	Bandits attacked the village at night burning and stealing some domestic animals.
22nd May, 2020 at farmland outside Dandume town, Dandume LGA.	Bandits attacked a farmer on the farm forcing him to hand over two bulls.
22nd June, 2020 at Mai Kwama village Dandume LGA.	Bandits attacked the village killing 3 farmers. Stealing foodstuffs kept in grain silos.
12th July, 2020 at Mai Iyali village of Fastari LGA.	Bandits attacked a farm house to rustle 39 cows and 6 sheep from a cattle rearer.
14th September, 2020 at Daulai village of Safan LGA.	Bandits attacked the village, kidnaped 7 persons and bugled shop to steal food stuffs.

Source: Ladan and Matawalli, 2020

### Theoretical Framework

Several theories have been propounded by different analysts to explain the incidence of security challenges in Nigeria such as frustration-aggression theory, deprivation theory, etc, which have provided insight into the existence of the phenomenon but are inadequate to explain their persistence in spite of measures exerted to curb the menace. This has prompted the present study to resort to the natural state theory as a suitable framework of analysis because of its ability to fill the gap in the extant measures of tackling banditry in Nigeria. The theory was propounded by Aristotle and was made popular by Jowett, 1885, Ross, 1937 and Coplestone, 1946. The theory holds that the state emerged in order to provide the needs of individuals, govern that human being cannot satisfactorily provide their basic need. That is “the state must exist for an end, and the end upon which the state exist is the highest good of man” (Zarri, 1948:1) that is having a platform that will ensure the satisfaction of the basic needs individual cannot provide for himself or herself. This highest good was captured as pursuit of happiness by Aristotle. According to him, happiness is central to human existence and a necessary goal to be pursued. Aristotle equated all communities aim at some good in a greater degree than any other body. To achieve the basic needs of life, Sabine and Thorson (1973) averred that man must understand the potentialities of growth that are available and the possible means for actualizing the require basic needs of man.it is important to emphasize that the provision of human basic needs of life is the primary goals of the state and it is the surest measure to ensuring peace, security, stability and order (Ndubuisi, 2017).

According to Sara (2008), security is one of the most basic needs of man. The inability of Nigerian government to handle the situation of insecurity has among others, been attributed extensively to the failure of the state to coordinate itself and meet up with its basic responsibility of protecting the citizens. This explains the reasons for the preponderance of several challenges of securing the Nigerian state, especially the consolidation of ethnic militia and regional armies such as Boko Haram, Tiv-farmers militant groups, Fulani nomads among others. Also, the audacity with which the Fulani herdsmen attacks communities in the northwestern states and other parts of the country that they feel are trying to constitute encumbrances to them and the grazing of their cattle even in people’s farmlands. This has the tendency of multiplying insecurity of different forms in Nigeria.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The country's security situation has been quite these and volatile over the years. While the northwestern states are still under the siege of Boko Haram, the northwestern states is steadily sliding into the morass of rural banditry. Just like Boko Haram insurgency, rural banditry in the northwestern Nigeria has metamorphosed from a sporadic onset to a rapid upsurge in the recent times. Again, like the insurgents, the bandits have become not only stationary but also sedentary in the frontiers and hinterlands of the northwestern states. The consequences have been massive plundering and carnage which has plunged the region into a sort of humanitarian eschatology. The payment of ransoms for kidnapping by both constituted authorities and private individuals has contributed to the sustenance of the existing armed groups and new ones in Katsina state. Ransom's payment has become a reliable source of income for the bandits and uses the ransom to procure weapons, feed and fund operational logistics for carrying out attacks. The federal government current counter banditry effort in Kastina state, based on military reconnaissance and raids is good and commendable, but it has foiled to bring about the needed respite owing largely to the operational challenges arising from insufficient knowledge of the terrain. This makes the involvement of local vigilantes and community watch groups who have a better knowledge of the terrain more important this is because without the security of humans, regional and national security will be difficult to achieve. Therefore, this study recommended that:

1. The federal government as well as Katsina state government should provide sustainable means of livelihood for the youths so as to avoid being easily sway or becoming raw materials for seen threats to human security.
2. Payment of ransom to bandits should stop. This will make majority of attacks ceased due to a lack of funds for the procurement of weapons.
3. There is need for forceful inland and frontier policing. Such policing must deal with the region's peculiar circumstances of diverse borderlines, forest lands and hinterlands. This requires a tactical synergy between the vigilantes and the state security operatives.

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