



Has Banditry Come to Stay? Triggers, Impacts and Failures of Responses to Banditry in Northern Nigeria

Olasupo O. Thompson¹, Phoebe D. Awange², Modupe Obi³, Olugbenga Aina⁴, Kehinde Adeosun⁵, & Bamidele Jinadu⁶

¹History & International Studies Unit, Dept., of Communication & General Studies, Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria

²Graduate Student. University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos State, Nigeria

³Language Unit, Department of Communication & General Studies, Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria

^{4, 5 & 6}Peace and Strategic Studies Unit, Department of Communication & General Studies, Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria

Corresponding Author's E-mail: olakunleolasupo@yahoo.com

Abstract

This article examines the triggers, impacts and why responses to banditry has failed in northern Nigeria. It relied solely on secondary materials elicited from literature, the social media and media reports as well as documents from governmental and non-governmental organisations. The article is limited to the assessment of banditry on the northern part of Nigeria. The article finds that the triggers of banditry are multifaceted ranging from poverty, unemployment, weak institutions and climate change with its impacts on lives, livelihood, displacement and refugees as well as infrastructural decay. It has enormous impacts on lives, loss of livelihoods, infrastructures and institutions and displacements, food and nutritional security, and refugees. In spite of the responses from stakeholders from federal to local governments and public reactions against the leaders and security agents; much have not been achieved to end the phenomenon. The factors responsible for this are poor funding, unemployment, saboteurs and lucrativeness of banditry and politicisation of banditry among others. The article, hinged on the fragile state framework argues that until the triggers of banditry are addressed, the threat may stay for a long time. The article concludes that since the triggers of banditry like other insecurity is driven by State fragility, government must address the symptoms of fragility in the Nigerian State. The article recommends three levels of interventions, short term, and middle term and long term. This include addressing unemployment, reforming and building institutions and having the political will.

Key words: banditry, insecurity, Nigerian Armed Forces, weak institutions, terrorism, farmer-herders

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Introduction

Insecurity, whether national or human is one of the major challenges across the globe. Even the global powers are not immune from issues on insecurity. For instance, countries like the United States of America, Russia, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and China, are still confronted with issues like terrorism, migration, racial abuses and even the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). In Nigeria, like other countries, there has been so many insecurity challenges affecting the State. This ranges from insurgency, farmers-herders conflict, banditry, human trafficking, cybercrime, ritual killing to violent cult clashes (Thompson, 2021; Thompson, 2023). To be fair, lot of studies have examined these forms of insecurity (Thompson, Ojukwu and Nwaorgu 2016; Johnson and Olaniyan 2017; Iyekekpolo 2018; Akande and Shadare 2020). One recent and burning national security threat is banditry. Apart from its impact on lives and livelihood, it has affected Nigeria's image and society as a whole. For instance, Iluobe (2023) reports that over 30, 000 bandits are active across the northwest region of the country and that the majority of whom are from pastoral communities. While there is a growing literature on banditry (Kuna and Ibrahim 2015; Gadzama, Saddiq, Oduhie and Dariya 2018; Okoli and Ugwu 2019; WARN 2020; ICG 2020), the departure is that this article examines why state responses have failed so far.

This article answers the following questions: What are the triggers of banditry in northern Nigeria? What are the impacts of banditry on northern Nigeria? What are the responses and reactions to banditry in northern Nigeria? And finally what are the hindering factors to banditry in northern Nigeria? The article relied solely on secondary materials elicited from literature, the social media and media reports as well as documents from governmental and non-governmental organisations. By focusing on these issues, this study among others contribute to knowledge on peace and development, insecurity and its triggers, particularly banditry in Nigeria. This will further assist policy makers and donor countries in navigating the issue of insecurity in Nigeria, other than the overtly focus on Boko Haram insurgency.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the state fragility framework. Fragile States are defined by a number of scholars, states, and development agencies or international organisations. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), defines fragile states in a broad range of failing, failed, and recovering states that are unable or unwilling to adequately assure the



provision of security and basic services to significant portion of their populations and where the legitimacy of the governments is in question. USAID distinguishes between fragile states that are vulnerable from those that are already in crisis (FSDR/DEVINVEST, 2016). Fragility should not be seen from the prism of the donors, but by the citizenry (Osaghae 2007). There is a consensus that fragility revolves around breakdown in social contract, institutional capacity and political legitimacy (Vallings and Moreno-Torres 2005; Moe 2010; Burns Flournoy and Lindborg 2016; Nkwede, & Nwogbaga, 2017).

Some characteristics of fragile states are either internal or external. Mcloughlin (2009) asserts that internal factors include violent conflict, poverty, economic and structural conditions, weak formal institutions, and external factors include international political economy, regional and global insecurity. He further held that it is associated with violent conflict, sustained poverty as well as weak state legitimacy. The OECD (2016:16) identifies five frameworks for measuring fragility to include economic, environmental, political, societal and security – and measures each of these dimensions through the accumulation and combination of risks and capacity. Some implications of state fragility are its tendency to cause fragile lives (Lemmon 2014) and hinder the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and growth (Mcloughlin 2009; Their 2019). The IARAN (2017) describes Nigeria as a fragile State and the Fund for Peace (2020) describes Nigeria as not only a fragile State but places her on ‘failed’ alert (2020:51). The import of this framework is to elucidate how the triggers and failures of responses to banditry in northern Nigeria have been affected by the failed state syndrome.

Literature Review

Banditry is simply used to refer to acts of robbery, pillage, and violence in areas where the rule of law has broken down. It is synonymous with lawlessness, thieving, robbery, pillage. Tracing the history of banditry in Nigeria to colonial era, a scholar states:

In those days, wayfarers and merchants travelling along our local economic roads usually faced the threats and dangers of ambush from nondescript bandits. Armed bandits and criminals were known to be targeting goods ferried on the back of donkeys, camels, and ox carts. Those bandits on our trade routes would forcefully take those goods and disappear into the bush. That is just one dimension of the problem then. In other instances, the bandits would sometimes raid farming communities and villages with the intent of willful killing and wanton destruction of property. During such raids, the bandits



would destroy virtually everything in their path, including valuables, farm produce, etc. This subculture has been in existence even before the coming of colonialists to the territories of northern Nigeria (Jafar, 2018:2).

Supporting the claim above, The New Humanitarian (Formerly IRIN News 2018, 8-9) observed that the first recorded case of banditry occurred somewhere between “western Hausa land” and the Niger border in 1901 when a 12,000-strong camel train “laden with assorted grains” was attacked and 210 merchants killed. In recent times, origins of the phenomenon vary across the States in Nigeria. Wodu (2020) estimates that many of the armed bandits are of Fulani origin, as are many of the victims. Although some scholars term this act as rural banditry (Jumare and Surma, 2015; Uche and Iwuamadi, 2018; Okoli, 2019), evidences have shown that they seldom operate in urban areas, though flee into forests and rural areas.

The menace of banditry was reported by a former Governor of Borno State, Alhaji Mala Kachala in 2002 to the presidential committee on Nigeria’s National Security visiting his state that the Lake Chad region was plagued by an influx of armed rebels and large-scale trafficking in illicit arms and children; some of the rebels use Sambisa game reserve as their hideout; and that the rebels were responsible for the widespread banditry in the north-east region (*The New Humanitarian* [Formerly IRIN] 2002; Albert 2017). Anka (2017) observes that the aftermath of the general elections in 2011 exacerbated the issue of banditry in Zamfara State. According to Nadama (2019), these bandits who used to carry local Dane guns, cutlasses, and sticks targeted cattle owners/rearers found in isolated villages and forests and in response until the communities formed local vigilantes (Yankasai) among themselves. To some, the phenomenon of rural banditry is believed to be a fallout of persistent violence in rural communities within the last ten years (Uche and Iwuamadi 2018).

Nadama (2019) argued that banditry is at the root of the conflict between Fulani herders and farmers and are due to struggle for ownership of farmland and grazing reserves, direct effect of reaction against socio-political and economic marginalization of Fulanis by their Hausa counterparts, collaboration between home grown criminals and their collaborators from quite a number of their foreign collaborators mobilized from Niger Republic, Chad, Mali, Libya and Burkina Faso. (Nadama (2019), then highlighted other triggers to include: injustice by traditional rulers, long historical antagonistic relationship between the Fulanis and farmers,



drug abuse, unemployment, vulnerability of cattle owners, dispersed settlement, huge financial benefit of banditry, proliferation of fire arms, arbitrary use of power by the local vigilantes (*Yansakai*), and incessant out of court settlement by the Fulani (*Falaku*) which encourages others into the crime (2019: 1223-1224). The ICG (2020) stated how the *Yansakai*, the Fulani formed militia groups and gun owners (*Yan-bindiga*) mobilised to protect themselves and their cattle and to avenge vigilante atrocities from the bandits (2020:8). Gadzama et al (2018:46) in a quantitative study among 293 respondents on rural banditry in Gwari Local Government of Kaduna State viewed the triggers to be rural poverty (168 respondents -- 57.2 percent), greed (35 respondents --- 11.9 percent), corruption (54 respondents --- 18.3 percent), and poor security (40 respondents -- 12.6 percent). Recent revelations show that the lucrativeness of kidnapping, discovery of gold mines and the activities of illegal miners competing for the control of gold reserves have served to further intensify the existence and activities of armed groups in the northwest (ACAPS 2020; Orjinmo 2020). Obi and Iwuoha (2023) concludes that wholesale farmland allocation, poor vigilante governance and bandits' covert alliance with some traditional authorities for intelligence and benefits sharing re three communal-level perspectives, to the pervasiveness of armed banditry in Nigeria's Northwest region.

Triggers of Banditry in Northern Nigeria

Tukur (2013) identified climate change epidemics, bush burning and market forces as some of the triggers of banditry. Hassan (2015) identified the 10 factors that triggers rural banditry and social conflicts as ecological and climate change, consistent shift in the human and livestock population; expansion in non-agricultural use of land; weak state capacity, inadequate security; proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs); rise of criminality, insecurity in rural areas and weakening or collapse of informal conflict resolution mechanisms. Egwu (2015), in a study conducted in Plateau State, Nigeria identified unemployment (44 percent), ethno-religious conflict (23 percent), greed (18 percent), robbery (5.9 percent), insecurity (6.8 percent), and psychological needs (2.3 percent) as the causes of rural banditry. Jumare and Surma (2015) identified abject poverty, politics, religion, prices of cows in the market as the triggers. Okoli (2019), states that rural banditry are driven by the absence of effective community policing mechanisms capable of addressing the hinterlands' peculiar security challenges, unregulated rural pastoral sector, illicit artisanal



mining and the proliferation of arms in the region, geographical location and unguarded or porous borders, poorly governed mining and small arms sector and unregulated movement of cattle or transhumance. Okoli and Ugwu (2019) opine that the drivers of banditry in northern Nigeria are as a result of the socio-existential conditions that characterize the interior as well as the frontiers of the region. They espoused that these drivers are scarcely governed hinterlands, forestlands and borderlines of the region, proliferation of small arms and light weapons into Nigeria from the Sahel since the fall of the Muammar Ghadafi administration in Libya in 2018, among others. Many scholars and think-tanks are of the views that the drivers of banditry in the northwest are multifaceted (Okoli and Ugwu 2018; ICG 2020: i). Okoli and Ugwu (2018:210) further identified the terms ‘ungoverned’, ‘under-governed’ and ‘ungovernable’ spheres within the territorial domain of the focal area. Other scholars aver that the drivers are the question of transhumance, the poorly regulated livestock enterprise in northwestern Nigeria has led to its infiltration by criminals (Olaniyan and Yahaya 2016; Okoli and Lenshie 2018). Iluobe (2023) opines that restrictions to access to land and resources which are central to the sustenance of their livelihoods is also the cause of the growing banditry in northwest Nigeria and thus driven by a moral economy within which it is made legitimate and reproduced in part because of this broader issue. He went further to state that while as part of its 1975-1980 National Development Plan, the Nigerian government aimed to establish grazing lands to safeguard pastoralism, this had recorded little successes. There are no doubts that these triggers are symptoms of fragile States.

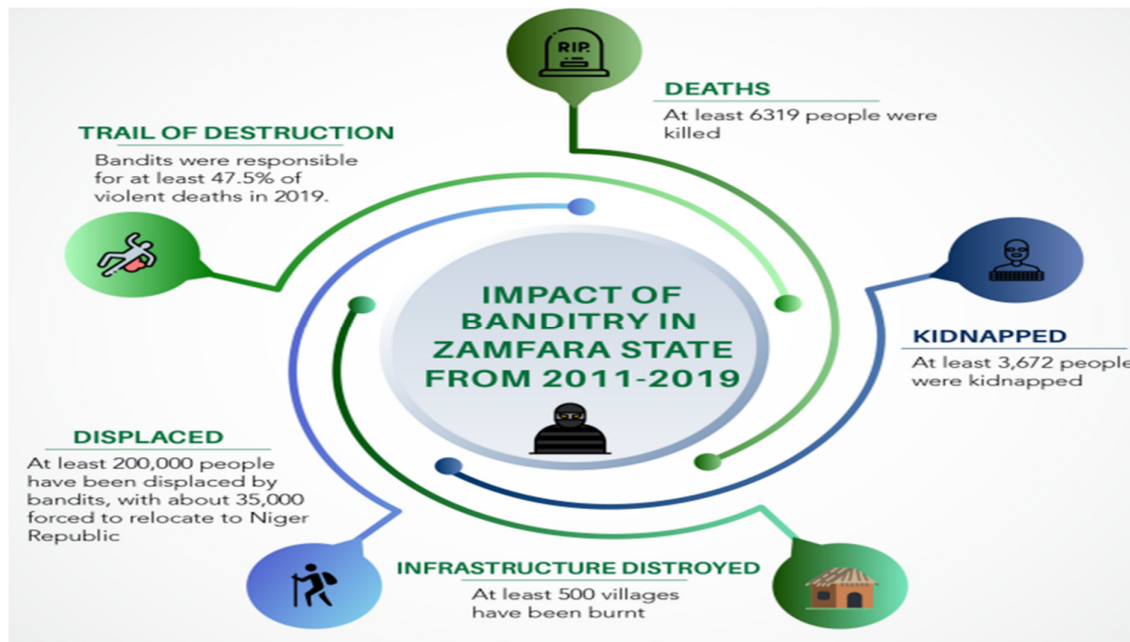
Impacts of Banditry on Northern Nigeria

Banditry has led to the loss of lives, property, and livelihood and widened the poverty gap in the northern part of Nigeria. An estimated 4,983 women were widowed, 25,050 children orphaned, death of over 11,000 male adults, 44,000 orphans at an estimated average of four children per deceased, and 190,340 others internally displaced between June 2011 and May 2019 in Zamfara State (Baiyewu 2019; WARN 2020). Further the WARN (2020) reports that over 10,000 cattle were lost, while 2,688 hectares of farmlands and 10,000 houses destroyed within 2011 and mid-2018 in Zamfara State. Also, it was reported that Zamfara State recorded the loss of 147,800 vehicles and motorcycles between June 2011 to May 2019 (WARN 2020:2).



In November 2019, an estimated 4,000 people were also displaced in Shiroro LGA of Niger State alone (2020:2). In Katsina State, over 2,000 people were killed, 500 communities destroyed and over 33,000 people displaced (WARN 2020: 2). The District Head of Batsari, Batsari Local Government Area of Katsina State, Alhaji Mohammed Muazu, revealed in July 2020 that the losses are unquantifiable, but that deaths in the area alone was around 300 men, 500 widows and 1600 orphans (Interview with Olaide Oyelude in *Punch* 2020). Another recent study show that more than 8,000 people have been killed in the northwest– mainly in Zamfara state – with over 200,000 internally displaced and about 60,000 fleeing into Niger Republic over the last decade (ICG 2020:i-ii). Supporting this report, the Nigeria Security Tracker puts the figure at 8,500 in the seven states that make up the northwest region, which is made up of Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara states between 2011 and 2020 (Campbell and McCaslin 2020). These figures could even be more owing to many unreported cases and activities of the bandits in remote villages.

Figure 1: Impact of Banditry in Zamfara State, 2011-2019



Source: Goodluck Jonathan Foundation (2021: 31)

Law enforcement agencies, local and community vigilante groups, religious institutions, Nigerian Army, and vulnerable populations including women, children and the elderly have not been spared in their attacks. Member representing Niger East Senatorial District, Mohammed Sani Musa, decried the activities of the bandits in his district this way:



My heart is pained seeing the bloodletting in my constituency. Women are raped and killed. Men are maimed and children rendered fatherless. This development is really sad, especially that it has remained a recurring decimal. We have made several appeals to the federal government, we paid courtesy visit to His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari on our predicament. But, yet no end to these marauders carnage as they keep killing and maiming our people (*The Eagle online* 2020)

Similarly, it has also affected farming activities, destruction of social institutions such as healthcare centres, religious institutions, and schools. The attendant effect of this is increasing the number of out-of-school children which number is already alarming in the country and the north in particular. As Alhaji Mohammed Muazu puts it:

....Apart from disrupting our farming activities, the bandits rustled between three million and four million cows which are mainly bulls. Also, our children could not go to school anymore in all the areas that the bandits attacked because of their safety. Some of the children are being relocated to other places considered safer (Interview, Alhaji Mohammed Muazu, in *Punch* 2020)

Corroborating the incessant spiral effect on refugees and internal displaced persons (IDPs), ACAPS (2020) stated that more than 210,000 people have been displaced; more than 35,000 refugees have crossed to Maradi in Niger Republic by the beginning of March 2020 and that the refugees are hosted in Madaou in Tahoua region, Dan Dadji Makaou, Garin Kaka and Guidan Roumdji. The Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar further puts it:

Security situation in northern Nigeria has assumed a worrisome situation. People think North is safe, but that assumption is not true. In fact, it's the worst place to be in this country. Because bandits go around in the villages, households and markets with their AK 47 and nobody is challenging them (Opejobi 2020)

The above is coming from the spiritual mouth piece of the North and Muslims in the country. Such effrontery of bandits not only depicts the boldness of these brigands but also the failure of the State governors who have been decapitated to effectively manage and secure their states without relying on the Federal Government's assistance. Generally, banditry has implications on northern Nigeria and the country as a whole. Some of these implications are creation of community security who are famous for human right abuses. It also has impact on sustainable peace and security, social dislocation and internal displacements, sexual and gender violence, education resulting in increasing cases of out-of-school children, livelihood and food security, wider economic costs, reduction of diary (meat, manure for farming, milk),



sapping of national security, lower standard of living, entrenchment of poverty, humanitarian and social impact, (Jumare and Surma 2015; Anka 2017; Gadzama et al 2018:47; WARN 2020; ICG 2020) as well as nutritional security.

Responses and Reactions to Banditry in Northern Nigeria

Federal Government:

One of the ways by which the Nigerian State approached the issue of banditry in Nigeria was to use force. In 2014, the Nigerian Police Force, under a former Inspector General of Police, Suleiman Abba launched the Task Force on Cattle Rustling and Associated Crime to patrol and operate in the context of intelligence gathering on anti-rustling and related crimes, in addition to investigating and possibly prosecuting reported cases of such crimes. However, it was reported that it was inactive (Olaniyan and Yahaya 2016: 100).

In 2015, the Defence Headquarters launched Operation *Sharan Daji* to fight against cattle rustling and banditry in Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto and Kebbi states in northwest Nigeria. Similar operations, including operation accord, puff adder, were established to complement *Haran Daji*. Operation Harbin Kunama (Scorpion Sting) was launched by President Muhammadu Buhari in August 2016 to halt the roving bandits in parts of Kaduna and Zamafara States. Operation Habin Kunama II was launched in April but commenced operation in December 2017 to curb farmer-herder clashes and ethno-religious conflicts in southern Kaduna and parts of adjoining Plateau state. Operation SharamDaji was revamped in July 2018 and reorganised in May 2019 (DHQ 2019). The Nigerian Air Force also launched operation *Diran Mikiya*, its own version to complete the armed forces in 2018. Operation *Harbin Kunama* III (Scorpion Sting) was launched on 1st April 2019 to arrest fleeing bandits from Katsina to other neighbouring states like Sokoto, Kaduna, among others. In May 2019, a joint security team from the Nigerian army's 8th Division, based in Sokoto, met with their Nigerian counterparts in order to discuss cross-border security strategies (ICG 2020:20).

Furthermore, the Federal Government suspended mining activities and also ordered foreign miners in Zamfara State to vacate the State in order to curb the activities of armed bandits.



This was after the FG established a link between the activities of the bandits and illicit miners. As the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Abubakar Adamu puts it:

As part of sustained efforts to flush out, and permanently put an end to armed banditry and criminality in Zamfara State, in particular, and the northwest in general, the Nigeria Police Force in collaboration with the Nigerian Military and other security services has commenced ‘Operation Puff-Adder’, which is a full-scale security offensive against the bandits (Daka, Akhaine, Alabi et al 2019).

To be honest, the operations have been successful in some respects. Giving some of its testimonies, the DHQ in June 2020 stated in a press release that:

Within the period under review, the Land and Air components of Operations HADARIN DAJI, KATSINA and ACCORD, carried out aggressive Clearance Operations at several identified bandits’ enclaves. Most importantly was the

attack on 3 camps operated by one “AdamuAleiro” in a forest along Katsina – Zamfara boundary area. Scores of bandits were killed during that encounter, with several others injured. In the process, troops also apprehended 3 suspected bandits, including one Ibrahim Isa clad in military camouflage while 6 kidnapped victims were rescued, amongst other recoveries (Eneche 2020a)

The Air Component of Operation *Gama Aiki* at KasuwanAngo Community in Mariga Local Government Area (LGA) of Niger State launched an air strike on the night of 28th and early hours of 29th June 2020 sequel to credible intelligence reports indicating that some armed bandits in black attire were seen on the move with a large number of rustled cattle in the area. The operation did not only disrupt the activities of a group of armed bandits but also led to the capture of two foreigners suspected to be mercenaries (Eneche 2020b) supporting the bandits in training and logistics. Such operations have continued against the bandits. However, the FG has not been the only stakeholders to respond to the phenomenon.

State Governments

The Northwest governors have been collaborating with the Federal Government since the commencement of military attacks on the bandits through funding of operations and welfare of the officers. In 2013, the Zamfara state government recruited about 12,500 vigilantes, with a monthly allowance of about 2,250 naira and provided them logistical support until the end of 2014 (ICG 2020:21). It has also continued to support the FG by providing logistics and welfare for some of the troops deployed to the state. In Zamfara state, former Governor Abdulaziz Yari reported that from 2015 to 2019, his administration spent 35 billion naira (about \$95.8 million) on logistics support to federal security agencies, special allowances for



security personnel deployed to the state and relief for victims of the attacks (2020: 21-22). Complementarily, dialogue was also adopted by most state governments in northwest Nigeria.

Early known case of dialogue took place in Zamfara State in 2016 when the then deputy governor of Zamfara State, Alhaji Ibrahim Wakkala Muhammad on Wednesday 14th December 2016, led top military experts including the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 1 division, Major General Adeniyi Oyebade, Police officials, Emir of Dansadau Alhaji Hussaini Umar, Abdullahi Maikano Dansadau and Maru local Government Council chairman, SalisuIsah Dangulbi among others to Gobirawa Chali village in the troubled Dansadau district of Maru LGA of Zamfara State to hold peace talks with representatives of the bandits (Oshoko 2016). Alhaji Muhammad said Zamfara state Government had found it very imperative to have a peace dialogue between the government and all armed groups in the state in order to have a lasting peace that will promote Economic growth and Social activities and that the process just focus on achieving long lasting peace in the state and Nigeria at large (Oshoko 2016). The issues raised by the bandits were among others, unauthorized vigilantes must stop the wanton attacks against their communities, security agencies and vigilante groups must also stop seizing their cattle and lastly the government must not continue to neglect their communities in the area of development (Interview, Sheetu, S. 64years, Dumburum Village, Zurmi Local government Area of Zamfara State, 12 June, 2017 in Anka 2017:165). Furthermore, leader of the armed bandits, BuhariTsoho (also known as 'BuharinDaji') also expressed dissatisfactions on how all the grazing routes and grazing reserves were turned to farmlands by politicians and traditional rulers (Oshoko 2016). However, the peace deal failed for many reasons. Some of which were the failure to carry all the bandit's groups along and government renege on its promises (Anka 2017:167).

Another attempt to negotiate with the bandits began in 2019. Some of the terms of the bandits were among others, that members of the bandits who were arrested by the Nigeria Armed Forces should be released. The Zamfara State Governor, Bello Matawalle, in July 2019 stated that he took the decision to negotiate with the bandits so as to end the insecurity in the state and allow the people to go about their daily business without fear. His counterparts in Sokoto State, Governor Aminu Waziri Tambuwal and Katsina State,



Governor Aminu Masari gave similar reasons and affirmed that the weal to negotiate was yielding fruit. In an interview Governor Masari granted in a national daily in September 2019, he said:

Now I can say over 80% of people under captivity in Katsina State have been released. So, in terms of group kidnapping I can only remember that right now only 13 people that we are searching for. We have only 13 people. But in terms of massive attacks since we started, there was no single massive attack on any village or any community. By my account, about 57 people have been released by them, most of them women and young children. Among them even are nationals of Niger Republic. So, for us it has brought relative peace. The next step is the issue of disarming the bandits and commanders in the forest that command 200, 300, 400 fighters, fully armed on motorbikes.

Meanwhile, one of their counterparts, Governor Nasir El' Rufai, refused the temptation. His reason was because the bandits had killed a lot of people and rendered many homeless. To him:

The security agencies are doing the best they can, but they find it difficult to get to remote areas in good time due to poor access roads while the natives also find it difficult to get to them due to poor GSM network. But I'm grateful to the air force, army, police, and the Department of State Services for always being prompt; it would have been worse if not for their prompt intervention. They would have wiped out the villages, but people are still there (Ameh, Alechenu and Isenyo 2020).

However, despite the mixed reactions to tackling banditry by the state Governors, the attack by the Bandits increased than ever. Consequently, the northwest state Governors then engaged local hunters and vigilantes to engage the bandits and other insecurity issues in the region. And since the issue of banditry is spreading beyond the northwest borders, they also set up a standing committee to help foster synergy with security agencies in the enforcement of security measures in the northern region to be headed by Governor Yahaya Bello of Kogi State (Musa, Adama, Sadiq and Umar 2020).

Even when coronavirus emerged in the country, the bandits moved about during restrictions of movement without adherence to government's COVID-19 curtailment policies (Orjinmo, 2020). This is because they defies social distancing rules during their attacks (Orjinmo 2020). There is no doubt such condition could expose victims and citizens in the affected areas to the pandemic.



Meanwhile, the citizenry have also reacted to the banditry phenomenon. In January 2020, the National Assembly, which comprises of the Senate and the House of Representatives held different sessions to determine the spate of insecurity in the country. At the end of their deliberations, both houses agreed that there was need for change in the national security leadership. While the House of representatives resolved that the service chiefs had not been able to address the security challenges plaguing the country since their appointments by President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015, the House of Senate on its part called on the President to as a matter of urgency, sack the service chiefs because they are out of ideas and that they have overstayed their welcome (Amaize, Daniel, Okoli et al 2020).

Some religious, ethnic and political groups in the country including the Igbo apex group, Ohaneze Ndigbo; the pan-Yoruba socio-political organisation, Afenifere ; Pan Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF), founding member of the Arewa Consultative Forum and Kano politician, Alhaji Tanko Yakassi; the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), former Provost-marshal, Nigerian Army, Brigadier-General Idada Ikponmwon (retired) and former gaffer of the nation's electoral body, Professor A.B.C Nwosu, all backed the resolutions by the national assembly for the sack of the security chiefs over rising insecurity in the country(Amaize et al 2020).

Similarly, a national newspaper conducted an online poll on both its Twitter and Facebook pages on whether the service chiefs should be sacked. In the Twitter poll involving 3,137 persons, 82.6 percent of the voters (2,591 respondents) called on the former President, Muhammadu Buhari to sack the service chiefs while 5.3 percent of the respondents (166) did not support the call and the third option which was 'I don't care' had 12.1 percent of the voters (380). On its Facebook, the total number of respondents were 2,916. Of this number of respondents, 91.7 percent of the voters (2,674 respondents) called for sacking of the service chiefs while the remaining 8.3 percent (242 respondents) voted that they should not be sacked (Abioye, Adeoye, Adepegba et al 2020).

But while these reactions were only directed towards the sacking of the service chiefs, some groups called on the former Governor of Katsina State, Aminu Bello Masari and former President Buhari to resign. This was coming at the back hill that Katsina State is the home of former President Buhari and it ought not to experience such menace. The protesters who stormed the Katsina State government house, called on former President Buhari and former



Governor Masari to resign if they could not end banditry and spate of insecurity orchestrated by the activities of the bandits in the state. For instance, the North West Vice-Chairman of the coalition, Jamilu Aliyu Charanchi who led the youths called for the overhaul of Nigeria's security architecture and various attempts by the government to reassert public confidence with repeated rhetoric of being on top of the situation is increasingly discordant as the violent attacks, killings and kidnapping become regular. Similarly, Lukman Umar who is the Katsina State Chairman of the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN), stated that Katsina which used to be peaceful has been plunged into avoidable chaos. As he puts it:

The audacity of the bandits is appalling. They sack villages and annihilate the people in broad daylight. They rustle cows, raze markets, and reduce houses to rubble. They destroy farms and pillage resources. They rape women and abduct men and demand a ransom their relations cannot afford (Aminu, Olaniyi, mac-Leva et al 2020).

Some of the placards they carried displayed various inscriptions such as, "Buhari and Masari resign if you cannot protect us", 'End banditry in Katsina', 'Enough is Enough' 'Katsina is a home of hospitality', ' We need peace' 'Do the needful before they finish us' etc (Nwafor 2020). In response, Governor Masari said:

I don't know what to tell them. I cannot look at them in the face because we have failed to protect them, contrary to our pledge to ensure the security of lives and property throughout the state. I never expected the living behaviour and the attitude of people living in the forests, the bandits, whose behaviour is worse than that of animals. In the forest, a lion or a tiger kills only when it is hungry and it doesn't kill all animals, it only kills the one it can eat at a time. But what we see here is that bandits come to town, spray bullets, kill indiscriminately for no purpose and no reason whatsoever, like the recent massacre of people at Faskari and parts of Dandume local government area. They just killed the people. How can a human being behave the way an animal cannot behave? (Nwafor 2020).

The above shows frustrations from a Governor, who is supposed to be the chief security officer of the State.

Factors Hindering Stakeholders Responses

The former Chief of Army Staff, Lt General Tukur Buratai discussed the issues of inadequate equipment, low morale among others as the factors that will make the fight against the insurgency and banditry hard for any other military chief. As he puts it:



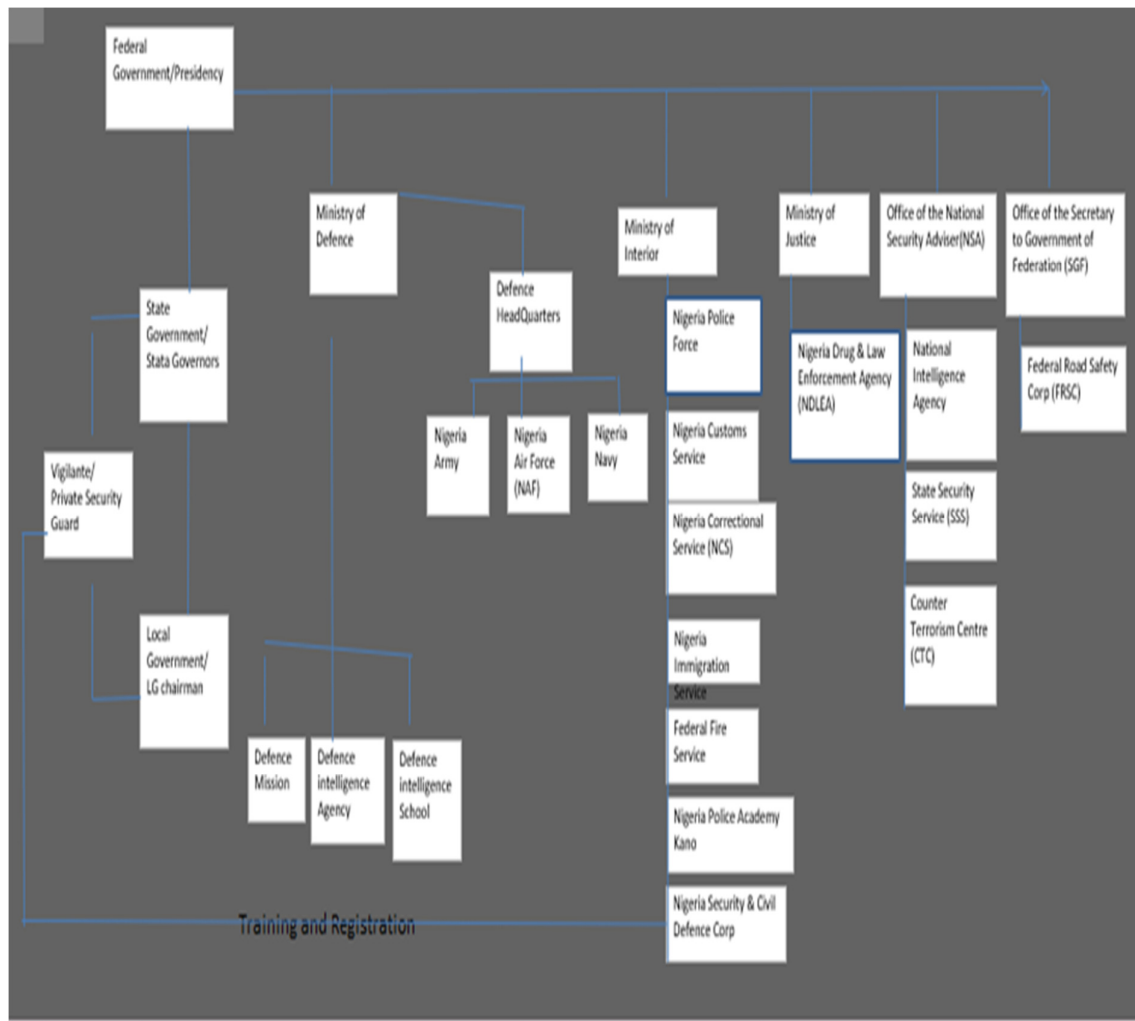
I am tempted not to comment on this particular issue because I am directly involved. However, I want to believe that whatever happens, the commander-in-chief is the right arbiter, and he knows where it pinches, he knows where the problems are. I think the decision should be left to him. He should not be pushed or prompted in this regard (The Cable 2020).

While the above are only pedestrian reasons, it is pertinent to view the issue based on analytical studies. What then are these factors? Some of these factors include porous borders, poverty, mass illiteracy, low moral values, among others. To further expatiate on some of these issues, a former Senator representing Kaduna State, ShehuSani stated in 2015 gave 13 factors responsible for the continued insecurity in the country. The reasons he gave were: manipulation of religion, disconnect between the government and the governed, prevalence of social and economic injustices, global terror epidemic-terror contagion, collapse of public education, massive unemployment, proliferation of arms and unguarded borders, underdevelopment of the north by past administrations, human rights abuses and extra-judicial killings, economic collapse of the north, master-servant relationship orchestrated by capitalism, disunity in the north occasioned by intra-fighting by between ethnic groups and finally, the distortions of religious realities (Muhammad 2015). But since the case of banditry has increased in spite of the negotiations, ShehuSani specifically gave three reasons via his Twitter account:

Three reasons why negotiations with bandits led to more attacks; Firstly, Bandits are cluster groups without a central leadership; Their motivation is money and can only be sustained by money; They are transnational gangs, operates without respect or recognition for any laws or Gov't [sic] (Sani 2020)

Aside these reasons, are there other reasons? With Nigeria as the then poverty capital of the world with most of these people living in the north (Mailafia 2019; NBS 2020), as well as a country with low human development index (HDI)—157/189 (UNDP 2019), no doubt that such economically fragile state will continue to battle many insecurity challenges.

Figure 2: Nigeria's National Security Structure/Architecture



Source: Thompson (2021)

Figure 2 shows the national security structure or architecture of the country. Thompson (2021) faults the nation’s security architecture, which he believe ridicules the true state of federalism by concentrating and arrogating too much power to the President, who is at the centre. In a situation where the Military high command as well as the law enforcement agencies are only liable to the centre and where the state governments could not establish state police to effectively police their States, then, such security architecture is faulty. These have made the states to over-rely on the Nigeria Army, who are fighting in almost all fronts across the States. Apart from sapping the military, funds meant for security and defense have been allegedly siphoned or misappropriated. This has been established in some viral videos by some military officers requesting or complaining about inadequate weapons, state of



corruption and insincerity in the fight against insurgency and general insecurity across the country

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nca8ja_JFU0; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuANgLDzXB0>).

A collaboration between Boko Haram and bandits. There was a palpable fear that bandits and Boko Haram would likely strike a collaborative effort thereby heightening both human and national insecurity when the late Abubakar Shekau's faction of Boko haram once called on the bandits operating across the country to join its fold (Odunsi 2020). This came to fruition when the Military Command confirmed that the type of weaponry found with the bandits such as anti-aircraft gun, PKT gun which is capable of shooting down an aircraft were indications that some Boko haram criminals might also be linked to banditry and may have relocated to the Northwest and North-central (Sahara Reporters, 2020). No doubt that such combination has continued to overwhelm the already weak state and sapped security agencies as well as their morale (Goodluck Jonathan Foundation, 2021). As General Tukur Buratai stated that Nigeria military is not only hindered by non-timely and non-release of funds but also overstretched as a result of its presence and operations in tackling various insecurity challenges such as terrorism, kidnapping, cattle rustling, pipeline vandalism, communal clashes, and other forms of insecurity in 32 of Nigeria's 36 States. (Oyedele 2017). To further elucidate his point, the Nigerian Army via its twitter handle wrote:

...Where in the world has anyone seen bandits suddenly going on rampage with no clear cut [sic] goal than to cause chaos? Like a hydra headed monster, attack them in Borno more pop up in Katsina, Kaduna, Yobe, Nasarawa...it doesn't even make sense. With Northern Nigeria almost ungovernable and the Nigerian Army overstretched, soldiers from Niger have moved into Nigeria in their hundreds (*Defense News Nigeria* 2020).

Any wonder then that Tonwe and Eke (2013) asserts that incapacity of the state in effective service delivery, which has as a result created a situation of mass unemployment and extreme poverty are some of the triggers of Boko haram uprising. With the current weak structure and anatomy of the Nigerian State towards internal coercion and inability to control its internal and external borders, no doubt that the Nigerian Army and the Nigerian State will find it hard to defeat banditry. For example, the former Minister of Interior, Mr Rauf Aregbesola once acknowledged that the porous borders of the country are uncontrollable. Also, the eroding



roles and failures of the family, religious institutions, schools among others are also a characteristic of dysfunctional society. This explains why some members of the community including traditional/ religious rulers and community leaders as well as security agencies still act as spies for bandits (Grace, 2021). Hence, until these debilitating factors are addressed, the public reactions to sack or change the service chiefs, remove the state Governors or even the president will never stop the menace of banditry or other emerging criminal groups.

Politicisation of banditry and its lucrateness. The business of banditry which has turned so many into wealthy merchants overnight has also made the act enticing. Sheikh Ahmad Gumi noted that banditry has come to stay except they grant them amnesty (Gumi, 2021). Supporting this view was former Governor Bello Matawalle noted that it has become a business of the north and it is fuelling the insecurity in the country (Coker, 2023). Other factors hindering the fight against banditry are the reliance on foreign countries for weaponry, low military moral among others.

Conclusion and recommendations

The article concludes that since the triggers of banditry like other insecurity is driven by State fragility, government must address the symptoms of fragility in the Nigerian State; and until these drivers of fragility and banditry are addressed, change of baton may not change the narratives. Hence, the Nigerian State may have to live with some of these existential insecurity as a result of its dysfunctional society and fragile state features. The article makes three interventions which can be divided into short, middle, and long terms approaches. At the short term, the first is the need for political will, State must involve Nigerians in Diasporas who have been stretching their hands of fellowship to assist their motherland. These members are professionals in the various countries they reside. Also, Nigerian State must adopt quick response to early warning and engagement and if there must be negotiations with bandits, it must be at the position of strength, the borders must be well managed, the national security architecture should be restructured so that internal security are tackled by the Police and federating states should be allowed to create their security outfits, adequate identification of cattle and their herders/owners, prosecution of bandits, erring security



groups, and accomplices, timely provision of funds and increase in allocation to the security agencies, improving and investment in intelligence, boosting military morale through periodic engagements and adequately addressing their needs and challenges. At the middle term approach, there should be true federalism, good governance, rule of law, addressing the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) protocol on movement of goods and services, reform forestry and mining sectors, dousing tensions between herders and farmers, sustain and expand peace process and threat management, training the herdsman on adoption of ranching, proscribe carrying of weapons by herders, indigenous manufacturing of weaponry, indigenous defense system should be encouraged by traditional rulers, control of small arms and light weapons, addressing unemployment and poverty, developing rural areas, provision of good roads, creation of employment, basic education, intensify efforts to mitigate climate change and restoration of the environment as well as recharging the Lake Chad basin, and improving humanitarian response and livelihood recovery support through provision of social security. At the long term, government should address the drivers and triggers of fragility including weak institutions such as religious institutions, government agencies, and judiciary, legislative as well as the economy. This can be done through proper re-orientation and effective and efficient regulations.

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