



Banditry in Nigeria: Implications for National Security

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Abstract

The study examined the impact of banditry on the people of Nigeria with implications for National security. The general objective of the study was to examine the extent to which banditry activities have affected the right to life, personal liberty, freedom and progress of people in Nigeria. The study covered the period between 2014 and 2022. The study adopted the critical discuss analysis approach, from a political discourse point of view. Themes were generated from the research questions and examined under various sub-headings for patterns and analysis. Findings show that banditry has negatively affected the right to life, peace, freedom, and progress of people in Nigeria, resulting from the weak State security architecture. Individuals have been killed, exposed to psychological torture, displaced from their homes and subjected to harsh economic realities, as a result of banditry activities. Consequently, the study recommends that the government security forces should be complemented by private security outfits and the intelligence capacity of the military and the police forces should be enhanced to provide adequate security to people living in Nigeria. An Act of parliament should also be instituted to allow people to carry arms for self-defence.

Key Words: Banditry, Bandits, Kidnapping, National security, Unger-governed spaces.

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Introduction

National security is an embodiment of state-centric security and human security framework that ensures the stability, healthiness, prosperity, freedom and peace of a nation-state. The absence of mitigation or effective control of existential threats to the peace, security and safety of the citizens and the state indicates the incapability of the state's security architecture to manage its internal and external security challenges. This fact proposes that the level or degree of insecurity in the state and the harm to citizens will be minimal in a general atmosphere of order and



stability. The existence of existential threats in the state that create an atmosphere of fear, insecurity and substantial harm to the citizens on the other hand presupposes the incapacity of the state's security architecture to ensure the peace and security of the state and its citizens. In this wise, an atmosphere of uncertainty of the security of the people and even the state and its institutions will become prevalent. This scenario is the prevailing atmosphere in Nigeria. In Nigeria, insecurity activities such as terrorism, banditry, kidnapping for ransom and others have become prevalent across the state with most states in the North East, North West, North Central and South East the worst hit. The above assertions have been corroborated by Mayer (2021) and Aljazeera (2021).

Banditry and kidnapping activities have become active occurrences in Nigeria regularly posing a threat to the safety of the citizens in their houses, farmlands, and highways. Some people have resulted to flying to their destinations to avoid being killed or kidnapped by bandits on the highways. Examples of banditry and kidnapping activities include the Chibok Secondary School Girls (204) kidnapped in 2014, the Dapchi Secondary School Girls kidnap in 2018, the Owo Catholic church killings in 2022, and the Kaduna–Abuja train kidnapped in 2022 to mention a few (Amnesty International, 2021; Channels Television, 2021). The federal government have made attempts to arrest the drift in security, but the efforts and impacts seem to be spread too thin which explains the ascendancy of criminals and armed activities in Nigeria despite the existence of the government and all its security architecture. This assertion has been corroborated by Lenshie et al (2020); The Conversation (2022); Jannamike (2021); and Barnett and Rufai (2021).

Research conducted by the Goodluck Jonathan Foundation (2021) examined the linkage between terrorism and banditry and the security implications in Nigeria's Northwest and North central States of Niger, Zamfara, Kaduna and Katsina. The study adopted qualitative and descriptive methods including desk review and key informant interviews to generate data for analysis. Findings from the study show that banditry activities are motivated by the quest to get wealth in regions plagued by poverty and this has endangered public safety and security gravely in the studied states. In the same vein, Lawal (N.D.) conducted a study to unravel the causes and consequences of armed banditry in Nigeria focusing on Kebbi, Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto



States. The descriptive Survey via in-depth interviews was adopted for the study and the analysis was done using percentages and frequencies. Findings reveal that banditry as a social evil has harmed the lives, and properties, and caused grief, fear of being victimized and pain among the citizens. Furthermore, Ebonine (2022) conducted a qualitative study that drew data from the works of scholars, and newspapers to examine and establish the link between the rising spate of banditry and the quest to destroy Western Education and facilitate the Islamization agenda in Northern Nigeria.

Studies by scholars as indicated above (to the best of my knowledge), have focused on banditry and terrorism and its economic and national security implications for Nigeria. They are quite different from the present one for several reasons. First, they did not focus or deal specifically on the impact of banditry on the right to life, liberty, freedom of movement and association and progress of people in Nigeria but generally on the causes, consequences and security challenges of banditry. Second, the studies focused on areas of the Northwest and North central or North of Nigeria.

Thus, the present study is novel and significant in the sense that, it not only seeks to determine the effectiveness of the state security architecture in ensuring the maintenance of human security, in general but focuses on specific physical, psychological and humanistic security frameworks that are vital for human existence and the good life. Furthermore, the study is an attempt to balance the narrative and equalize studies on banditry that have focused on areas of the Northwest and north-central of Nigeria as the victims of banditry and kidnapping activities by examining cases from across the length and breadth of Nigeria. The study's scope thus, encompasses selected cases of banditry from affected states in Nigeria especially, where the incidences of banditry are rife. The study is qualitative and relies on both primary and secondary sources of data from newspapers, articles, television and the Internet. The qualitative approach making use of political discourse analysis, ensures the articulation of the nuances of the subject matter in a systematic manner to yield a better understanding. This study thus, focuses on the impacts of banditry in Nigeria and the implications for national security. The study posits that



banditry has negatively impacted the right to life, personal freedom, freedom of movement and association and psychological disorientation of the people living within Nigeria.

Banditry as a security problem has created existential threat to the people within Nigeria. Banditry and kidnapping activities have been on the rise in Nigeria especially since the year 2014. Various renegade groups have risen and taken up arms against the members of society and the state. Several persons have been raided, robbed, raped, maimed and killed by bandits. Kidnapping activities have been perpetrated by these renegade groups including terrorist groups who have now turned kidnapping for payment and ransom into a lucrative business. Though, the law against kidnapping was passed in March 2002, kidnapping and subjugation of victims to payment of ransom and still rife. Banditry and kidnapping activities have negative impacts on the security of the citizens and thus, on national security.

Banditry and kidnapping activities have impacted negatively on the freedom, peace and progress of society. They lead to loss of economic goods, and money, harm to peace, safety, freedom of movement and association, and lives. Banditry impinge on the capacity of the state to fulfil its obligation to guarantee the right to life, peace, freedom of movement and association and engage in the production of economic goods and material wellbeing. The federal and other tiers of government are struggling to ensure the security of their citizens as these renegade groups have continued to carry out illicit activities despite government efforts to curtail them, to the extent that some local government areas in Nigeria like Niger and Katsina states are under the control of bandits. This study is meant to critically analyze the activities of banditry to determine the effects these illicit activities have on the security, peace, freedom and progress of the people within the Nigerian geographical space and on national security.

The study seeks to answer the following questions in an attempt to determine the impact of banditry activities on the people in Nigeria: To what extent have banditry activities affected the security, peace, freedom, and progress of the people in Nigeria? How has banditry affected the capacity of the Nigerian state to guarantee the safety, freedom, peace and progress of the people in Nigeria? Following from the research questions, the study also seeks to realize the stated



objectives: To determine the extent to which banditry activities have affected the security, peace, freedom, and progress of the people in Nigeria; and also to determine the extent to which banditry has affected the state's capacity to guarantee the safety, freedom, peace and progress of the people in Nigeria. The study's scope is limited to the activities of bandits, including kidnapping from selected cases between 2014 and 2022 in Nigeria.

Conceptual Elucidation

Contemporary security (rural or urban) referred to as banditry has become a major problem in Nigeria particularly, in the northern part. This has led to a serious security threat to the lives, freedom, infrastructure, environment, and economy of Nigeria and Nigerians. Incidences of banditry have become a daily occurrence and conversation in Nigeria. This concept is explained within the context and operational understanding of the study.

A bandit according to Gustafson (2017:14) is an individual “who methodically acquires capital through the process of robbing others, typically within a gang or an organization that distributes wealth within its internal structure”. Thus, armed banditry represents the threat to or the actual employment of arms or other instruments of violence or coercion to deprive or rob people of their material belongings and inflict psychological harm on them. The use of arms and force by the bandits very often leads to the killings of people, destruction of properties and displacements of people leading to refugee crises (International Crisis Group, 2020). Typically, armed banditry represents the gang phenomenon even though some bandits can operate as lone brigands without associating with other networks of criminals (Okoli and Okpaleke, 2014).

According to Barnett (2021) on line page):

Nigeria's bandits are not easy to categorize “because there are so many of them and their conflict is constantly evolving. The bandits may number up to 30,000, spread across dozens of gangs ranging from 10 fighters to more than a thousand, most of whom are based in Zamfara state. They are driving humanitarian crises through their brutal raids on civilians and mass kidnappings while using heavy weapons to combat overstretched security forces.... They seem to fight for personal wealth and influence- and they fight



each other as much as the government- but they live in the bush rather than in gilded villas.

It can be thus inferred that banditry is an organized crime directly aimed at illicit wealth acquisition amidst the destruction of lives and properties occasioned by it. Kidnapping on the other hand represents or connotes the act of taking people hostage (away from the kidnap point) to achieve a particular objective (Abdullahi, 2019). Bandits and insurgents are most often associated with the activities of kidnapping and kidnapping for ransom. According to Murtala (2021), bandits are involved in the mass killings of mostly civilians, kidnapping, sexual violence, rustling of cattle and other associated human rights abuses. These various atrocities committed variously by bandits have harmed the safety, freedom of movement, and association; led to psychological dysfunctions, trauma from family separation and economic disarticulation of Nigerians and political instability in Nigeria. The above scenario termed the political economy of banditry and insecurity in Nigeria by this study continues to thrive despite the efforts of the state security apparatus to stem the tide. In line with the above assertions, Mutarla (2021) avers that structures and mechanisms put in place to arrest the upsurge of banditry activities in the Northern part of Nigeria by both state and non-state actors have been futile.

Theoretical Discourse

State Fragility and Banditry Activities

As a concept, State fragility has become an important aspect of international political tools for explaining the existence of various criminalities by stakeholders and scholars in the field. Several plausible generalizations have been put forward in this regard. For instance, the character of a collapsed state was described by Torres and Anderson (2004) while Rotberg (2004) conceptualized states that have either failed or are failing. Morcos (2005) conceptualized fragile states as countries that exhibit less capacity to evolve and execute public development-oriented policies and less capacity for political development. According to the Crisis States Research Centre (2007), state fragility is exemplified by countries exhibiting sub-systems vulnerability and are predominantly conflict-ridden internally and externally. In addition to the above, the term



‘failing state’ typified a country whose government has performed poorly in providing for the public good and achieving economic and people-oriented development (CRISE, 2009).

The Nigerian State typically fits into the above descriptions of a weak and failing state that lacks an effective security network to curb or mitigate banditry, kidnap for ransom and other criminalities. This position is corroborated by Falayi (2014) and Okoli and Lenshie (2018). The Nigerian State cannot exercise control over some areas of their territory (such as in Niger and Katsina) in combating internal threats of banditry, kidnapping and other forms of criminalities or insurgency (Stepputat and Engberg-Pedersen, 2008; Stewart and Brown, 2010; Lenshie et’ al, 2020). The Nigerian state is confronted with the challenge of providing effective security for its citizens mostly in the Northern parts where bandits have seriously undermined the military capacity of the security apparatus of the state despite the military efforts (Olokor, 2014; Okoli, 2019a). The inability of the state to evolve a superior strategy to counter the bandits and kidnapping network and operations portends the state as failing.

The Ungoverned Spaces Thesis and Banditry Activities

The conceptual framework of the ungoverned spaces thesis was developed from the fallout of the September 9/11 (2001) terrorist bombing of the World Trade Centres in the United States of America. According to Rabasa et al (2007), the theoretical perspective of ungoverned spaces is a paradigm that seeks to explain the spatial territorial dimensions of a state’s security problems, particularly from a fragile or weak state perspective. Lenshie et’ al (2020) aver that the deficiency in weak or fragile states presents the context and conducive environment for anti-state forces to usurp and dominate certain parts of a state’s territory. Organized crimes and insurgencies find expressions within ungoverned territories to carry out illicit activities (Ojo, 2020). The existing conditions or environment of ungoverned, poorly governed and under-governed spheres within a state creates the enabling environment for the evolution and activities of non-state actors that often compete with the state or contest its authority (Okoli, 2019). In the evolving scenario of ungoverned spaces, the absence of strong or formidable control by the authority of a state, according to Olayoku (2014), is that the people living within the affected



territory become gradually overwhelmed by an illicit governance system of the anti-state forces. In such instances, the state authority is usually subverted and usurped by irregular government established by bandits and insurgent groups.

The ungoverned spaces thesis applies to Nigeria. Nigeria's jurisdictional environment or territorial sphere is acutely under-governed in some remote areas. This assertion becomes apparent from the existence of under-controlled or under-policed hinterlands, forestlands, borderlands and international frontiers, especially in the Northern parts that anti-state groups have occupied (Albert, 2018; Okoli and Ogayi, 2018). In the Northwestern and North central parts of the Nigerian state, scores of bandits have taken over and authoritatively controlled several local communities in Zamfara, Niger, Katsina, Benue, Kaduna and Plateau states (Onwuzuruigbo, 2020). The weak or fragile state structure of the Nigerian state has manifested in various dysfunctional ways through poor management of the hinterland, and borderland, prevalence of communal, sectarian and extreme violence (Okoli and Ogayi 2018, Okoli, 2019b); and has become a safe place for organized criminality (Olaniyan, 2017). These poorly managed territories have provided the avenue for violently organized crimes like cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom and village raids to thrive (Okoli and Lenshie, 2018). These scenarios have accounted for the evolution of a criminally sustained economic environment within which armed banditry is produced and reproduced.

The employment of state fragility and ungoverned space perspectives to explain the criminality of banditry activities in Nigeria is very apt. The theories succinctly capture the dysfunctional and weak networks of institutions, resulting in poor governance, poor policy implementation, poverty, corruption and weak state capacity to respond to security threats such as bandits and other anti-state forces. This scenario thus leads to the evolution of various criminalities and organized criminal groups that have outstretched the state's capacity to authoritatively manage, control, and ensure the safety of the people within the Nigerian territory. The failure of government to properly coordinate the social institutions and ensure equity, effective participation and good governance, resulted in the fragility of these institutions, especially the



state security architecture. This failure led to the emergence and volatility of criminalities buoyed by the lack of effective control of the territorial spheres that have left some spaces either poorly governed or scarcely without government or security forces' presence. These poorly governed spaces have thus been taken over by bandits and other organized criminal groups. The pervading security threats in Nigeria have thus, impacted negatively on the right to life, freedom of movement and association, psychological orientation, safety and economic progress of the people.

These scenarios of ungoverned spaces controlled by bandits now create a situation where Nigerians live under the control or at the mercy of criminals and anti-state forces within the territorial spheres that the Nigerian government swore to protect and administer. There are no more appropriate and apt theoretical explanations of the Nigerian security dilemma than the above-exposed theories.

Methodology

The study adopts the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach in the analysis of the phenomena. One of the main socio-political approaches is critical discourse analysis, which focuses on the power structure and how discourse is affected and influenced by society and culture. According to Lua (2019, 2023), critical discourse analysis is a method of research for the study of written or spoken language about its social context. It is a qualitative research method adopted in the social sciences and humanities disciplines. Thus political discourse is used in this study to examine the effects of banditry and kidnapping for ransom on the abuse and dominance of society by renegade groups. The critical discourse analysis includes four steps (Luo, 2019/2023). These are defining the research questions and selecting the content of analysis, gathering data and theory on the context, analyzing the content for themes and patterns, reviewing results and drawing conclusions. The study is qualitative and relies on both primary and secondary sources of data from newspapers, articles, television and the Internet. The operationalization of the CDA for the study objectives is done below.

- 1) Define the research question and select the content of the analysis.



In line with the above, the research question was aptly defined and determined. The selected cases of banditry that have to do with killings, robbery, rape, maiming, dislocation, displacements, kidnapping, were the themes examined for the study.

2) Gather information and theory on the context.

In this regard, the concepts of banditry, kidnapping for ransom and National Security were examined within the context of the study. The theoretical frame of state fragility and the ungoverned spaces thesis was adopted in the explanation and analysis of the study phenomena.

3) Analyze the content for themes and patterns.

In this section, the data on the activities of banditry, gathered through primary and secondary data were analyzed and themes were generated and discussed under relevant subheads and patterns to produce the study's results. The results were linked with the research questions and objectives to ensure the validity of the study.

4) Review your research and conclude.

In this wise, the analysis of the study and results obtained were carefully examined to conclude the phenomena and the implications for the citizens and national security.

The discourse was structured into themes which were hypothesized and discussed under the following subheads.

1. Banditry has impacted negatively on the security and right to life of people in Nigeria.
2. Banditry has negatively affected the right to personal liberty and freedom of movement of people in Nigeria.
3. Banditry has created an atmosphere of fear, psychological disorientation and food insecurity in Nigeria.
4. Banditry has negatively impacted the economy of households in Nigeria.
5. The capacity of the Nigerian security apparatus to ensure adequate protection for people in Nigeria is weak.



Analysis of Data and Discussion of Findings

This section is discussed and analyzed according to the hypothesized themes constructed from the cases and activities of banditry and kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria.

Banditry impacts the safety and life of people in Nigeria.

Banditry activities in Nigeria have resulted in a high degree of insecurity and safety for the people in Nigeria. Armed bandits and other criminal gangs have carried out unprecedented acts of kidnapping, killings cattle rustling and targeted attacks on the public that have led to displacements and socio-economic disruptions in Nigeria, especially the Northern parts. Ojo, Oyewole and Aina (2023) reported that between 2018 and 2020 about 4,900 people were killed by bandits and hundreds of thousands internally displaced in the North-West of Nigeria. According to the International Crisis Group (2020), banditry attacks in the northwest led to the death of about 1,100 persons in 2018; over 2,200 in 2019 and over 1,600 deaths between January and June 2020. Between January and June 2021, 1,405 persons were kidnapped in the Northwest; 942 persons in the North-Central; 210 persons in the Northeast; 169 persons in the Southwest; 140 persons in the South-South; and 77 persons in the Southeast (Sahara Reporters, 2021). For instance, in 2014, 276 secondary school girls were kidnapped in Chibok, Borno state; 110 secondary school girls were kidnapped in Dapchi, Yobe state; in 2020, over 300 secondary school boys were also kidnapped from Kankara in Katsina state (Amnesty international, 2021; Orjinmo, 2021; Obiezu, 2023).

Banditry impacts on personal liberty, freedom of movement, and educational development in Nigeria.

The activities of armed bandits in Nigeria between 2014 and 2022 seriously limited and threatened the liberty and freedom of people in Nigeria to move from place to place. It also curtailed or disrupted mainly secondary educational development especially, in the Northern parts of Nigeria. Across the Nigerian states several roads, constituted deaths trap as bandits frequently attack and kidnap victims who travel along these roads. For instance, it was estimated that over US \$18 million was paid as ransom between January 2011 and March 2020 (The



Conversation, 2022). In 2019, several travellers were abducted by gunmen on the Owo-Benin road including the killing of Oba Adeusi- the Olufon of Ifon by gunmen (Alagbe, 2021). Furthermore, in 2020, many travellers were abducted on the Akure Road and Owo-Benin Road which were released after the payment of ransom (Alagbe, 2021).

Likewise in 2021 score of travellers were abducted by gunmen in Akure-Oyo express-way; these people were also released after the payment of ransom to the abductors. These incidences can result in a phobia of travelling on the roads (Alagbe, 2021; Mayer, 2021). Some of the roads considered highway risks and death traps in Nigeria, include- Kano-Kaduna, East-West, Ibadan-Ilesha, Akoko-Kogi-Lokoja-Abuja, Akure-Benin, Akure-Lagos, Ife-Ibadan, Owo-Benin, Lagos-Ibadan and others (Omorogbe, 2021; Alagbe, 2021). Travellers and transporter were robbed, abducted, raped and killed by bandits and criminal gangs on these roads (Omogbe, 2021). These heinous activities by bandits and other criminal elements across the Nigerian state have limited and threatened the liberty and freedom of people living in Nigeria to move about and travel to conduct their legitimate businesses. For example, between July 2021 and June 2022, a total of 500 incidences of kidnapping occurred in Nigeria leading to the abduction of 3,420, with 564 people killed (Obiezu, 2023).

Apart from the threats to liberty and freedom of movement, banditry and kidnapping activities have also disrupted the education system through targeted abductions of school children to the extent that some schools closed down their boarding facilities and even their sessions for fear of attack and abduction. Aside from the 2014 Chibok secondary school girls' abduction and the 2018 Dapchi school girls' abduction, Aljazeera stated that between 2020 and 2021, over 700 students were abducted, especially in the northern parts of Nigeria (Aljazeera (2021; Amnesty International, 2021). Aljazeera (2021) quoting a report from UNICEF noted that the massive student abductions have disrupted the academic activities of more than 5 million children. In 2021 Shiklam, Shuaibu, Sadauma and Dipo (2021) reported that 618 schools were closed down in six Northern states for fear of kidnappers, abducting the children. The states included Sokoto, Zamfara, Kano, Katsina, Niger, and Yobe. These incidences and actions have further



exacerbated the already low enrollment and standard of education in the Northern parts of Nigeria.

Banditry in Nigeria: A Creation of Extreme Fear, Psychological Disorientation and food insecurity in Nigeria

Banditry and other criminal elements have turned the various highways and society, especially the Northern parts of Nigeria into a theatre of fear, apprehension and psychological disorientation. Travellers and commuters have been thrown into a state of commotion as they daily live in fear of being killed, kidnapped or raped as they travel daily along the Nigerian roads. According to a report by Omoregbe (2021), in the East, West, North and South of Nigeria, commercial drivers and travellers decried the spate or rate of attacks by bandits and kidnapers that have resulted in the loss of lives, economy and valuables. Thus, motorists and travellers have been subjected to a constant state of fear as the attacks continued without stiff opposition from the security forces, Omoregbe, 2021). For instance, the interview conducted by the Nigerian tribune revealed that a commercial driver (Daniel Aibinuori) plying the Akure-Lokoja route stated that kidnapping on that route was a daily occurrence as empty vehicles are frequently seen on the roads with the occupants abducted. The Zamfara state government stated that between 2011 and 2019, about 6,319 people were killed and 3,672 were kidnapped while over 500 villages were raided by bandits in the state (Goodluck Jonathan Foundation, 2021).

Hassan (2021) stated that over 453,000 people in the North West have been driven from their homes, displaced and traumatized by banditry and kidnapping attacks. These attacks have also resulted in food and humanitarian crises for almost 3 million people. From the foregoing, it is evident that the scourge of banditry and kidnapping activities has adversely affected the people living in Nigeria, especially in the rural areas. Furthermore, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the National Commission for Refugee, Migrants and Internationally Displaced Persons stated that 210, 354 people have been, displaced from 171 communities as of March 2020 in the Northwest of Nigeria (UNHCR, 2020). The Nigeria National Bureau of statistics stated that the disruption of agricultural activities affected 26.95% of Nigeria's GDP in 2020 (The Guardian 2021). In line with the above, it has been stated that in



Katsina State, over 5,884 farmlands estimated at 58,330 hectares have been left or abandoned to insecurity as of March 2020 (Premium Times, 2021; International crisis Group, 2018). Thus, banditry and kidnapping activities have adversely harmed agricultural activities and worsened food insecurity, poverty and inequality in Nigeria.

Banditry impact on the Economy of Households in Nigeria

The activities of bandits have adversely affected the economy of households across states in Nigeria. Millions of Naira has been lost through ransom payments for victims of kidnapping. Sanni (2022) stated that research conducted by S.B. Morgan Intelligence published in August 2022, indicated that incidences of banditry and the associated cost of kidnapping for ransom are huge for both people and the country. According to the report, a recorded N6, 531 billion was demanded by bandits as ransom while the sum of N657.3 was paid between July 2021 and June 2022. In addition to the above sum, N100 million was collected from eight Nigerian hostages and N200 million from a Pakistani hostage on July 25, 2022 (Sanni, 2022, Peterside, 2022).

Banditry in Nigeria: The Effectiveness of Government Security Forces Response

Banditry activities pose a threat to the peace, stability, progress and security of the people in Nigeria and to national security. It is the duty of the Nigerian state by extension the government of Nigeria to ensure the safety of life and property and to ensure the physical and mental wellbeing of the people in Nigeria as provided by the constitution. However, the rate of banditry, kidnapping activities and other criminal vices across Nigeria has placed a big question mark on the capacity of the Nigerian security forces to provide adequate security for the life and property of the people within Nigeria. The conversation (2022) stated that more than 3,000 people were kidnapped in the first six months of 2021 and 571 in January 2022. Thus, banditry and criminal elemental activities cut across Nigeria.

Several military operations have been launched by both Federal and State Governments to curtail and mitigate the criminalities of banditry and kidnapping for ransom. The capacity of the Nigerian police force to contain criminality in Nigeria is limited. According to Arvin (2021), in a



country of about 200 million people, there are only 350,000 police officers; about 50 per cent of them are attached to VIPs (Governors, Companies and Private Citizens); 20 per cent, attend to administrative duties leaving about 30 per cent to fight crime across the country. Moreover, in Katsina state, there were only 30 police officers to police in 100 villages in August 2020 (Arvin, 2021). Thus, the capacity of the police to fight crime in Nigeria is grossly limited. The limited personnel of the police force give more room for the bandits and other criminal gangs to operate in mostly rural areas in Nigeria. In line with this notion, the new Humanitarian reported that the bandits operating in the Northwest of Nigeria in 2020 were about 30,000 divided into over 100 separate gangs with sophisticated weapons such as the AK 47 rifles (Anyadike, 2023). Because of the limitations of the police force in terms of shortage of personnel, the military was drafted in to help. The Nigerian Federal Government has launched several military operations to fight banditry, kidnapping and other forms of criminality in Nigeria (Onwuzuruigbo, 2020).

For example, in March and July of 2016, two separate operations were launched by the Nigerian military. Operation Habin Kunama was launched to target bandit groups in the Dansadau forest in Zamfara state and Operation Sharan Daji was launched to fight bandits in the Northwest of Nigeria. These two military operations yielded some successes as several bandits were killed, several others were captured while dozens of bandits' camps were destroyed. Similar successful operations were also conducted between 2016 and 2019 (The Guardian, 2021; Barnett and Rufai, 2021). In June of 2020, military operation Accord was launched which established a joint task force that incorporated local vigilantes and the military. The joint task Force killed over 70 bandits and destroyed multiple bandits' camps in the Northwest of Nigeria (The Guardian, 2021). Apart from these measures, in 2018, the military operations used aerial bombardment against bandits in occupied forests. The efforts were strengthened by the seizure of telecommunication services in parts of the Northwest in the last quarter of 2021 for several weeks to limit the ability of the bandits to communicate among themselves and to rescue information about the activities of the military (The Conversation, 2022). These operations failed to weaken the bandit groups as the air raids resulted in civilian casualties that worsened the



crisis. Also, the lack of ground troops' support enabled the bandits to move from one location to the other evading the aerial attacks (The conversation, 2022).

However, these operations were difficult to sustain and the measures by the government yielded successes momentarily and only produced a brief period of calm. The bandits were forced to relocate to other areas and regroup to unleash further attacks on the people (Barnet and Rufai, 2021). The capacity of the Nigerian security forces to combat banditry and kidnapping has been further compounded by the existence of a large expanse of poorly governed or under-governed spheres within the Nigerian state, especially the North West. The bandits took advantage of the poorly governed spaces and assumed control of several communities in Zamfara, Katsina, Benue, Kaduna and Plateau states extorting royalties and oppressing and raiding the communities at will (Onwuzuruigbo, 2020). The sparsely governed or under-governed spaces have provided bandits and other criminal gangs the opportunity to carry out their criminal acts and hide or have the advantage of relocating from place to place to avoid the government security forces (Albert 2018). These scenarios and development project the Nigerian state as weak because of the inability or incapacity to protect the lives of the people living in Nigeria and to ensure their economic, social, physical and mental wellbeing. Lenshie et al. (2020) in support of the above assertion, aver that a weak or fragile state presents an opportunity for anti-state forces to dominate certain parts of the state due to poor governance and security capacity.

Analysis of Results and Implications for National Security

This section contains the analysis of results on the impact of banditry on the rights to life, personal liberty, freedom of movement and association of people in Nigeria and the implication on National security between 2014 and 2022. Two questions were proposed to be answered by the study. These were: (1) To find out if banditry activities have negatively affected the security, peace, freedom and progress of people in Nigeria, and (2) To find out if banditry activities have affected the capacity of the Nigerian state to guarantee the safety, freedom, peace and progress of people in Nigeria.



In line with the above research questions, the objectives of the study were thus, to determine the extent to which banditry activities have affected the security, peace, freedom and progress of people in Nigeria; including the capacity of the Nigerian security forces to guarantee security. To this end, five themes were structured out of the research questions under which the various subjects of the study were analyzed.

The results of the analysis of theme one shows that incidences of banditry have resulted in the deaths of thousands of people in Nigeria. People are being kidnapped daily and killed, villages are raided and razed. Thus, the activities of bandits have posed an existential threat to the generality of people in Nigeria. These results have achieved research objectives one and two and research questions one and two. The results of the cases and incidences of banditry examined in theme two shows that banditry activities have grossly limited the rights to personal liberty and freedom of movement of people in Nigeria. Due to the high rate of kidnapping in towns and villages and on the highways in Nigeria, people's liberty has been curtailed as they live in fear and secluded. Thus, freedom of movement has been limited as they seldom travel for fear of being kidnapped, robbed and killed by bandits. These results achieved and answered research objectives and questions one and two.

The results of the theme three analysis show that banditry activities have caused the people in Nigeria to live in a disoriented state of perpetual fear and agricultural retardation. The victims of kidnap and their relatives pass through agony, as the victims are subjected to torture, rape, hunger, death and more. Even after their release, their experiences continue to hunt them. On their part, the kidnap victims' relatives pass through a lot of trauma as a result of the incident and the process of raising the ransom payment. Thousands of people have fled several rural areas, especially in the North West, displaced and put in IDP camps as a result of bandits' attack. Many schools in the Northwest were closed down in 2021 because of the incessant banditry attacks and mass abductions of secondary school students. Banditry activities have also, negatively affected agricultural activities. Farming activities have suffered neglect as people in Nigeria are afraid of being kidnapped in the farms and many people in the Northwest have fled their homes and have



been displaced and turned IDPs while many able-bodied men and women have been killed. The farming communities have thus been depleted causing a serious food security crisis in Nigeria, especially in the Northern parts. Pastoralists' economic power has been depleted as bandits and other criminal elements rustle cattle, especially in Northern Nigeria. These activities of bandits have affected the livelihood of cattle owners, members of the public and the economy negatively as a result of cattle loss, money loss and shortage of beef; thus increasing food insecurity. The analysis shows that the activities of bandits have caused colossal damage to the Nigerian economy and agriculture. These scenarios posed an existential threat to the peace, and physical and mental well-being of people in Nigeria. These results thus, achieved the research objectives and research questions one and two.

The results of the analysis of theme four show that the activities of bandits have negatively and grossly affected the economy of households in Nigeria. Billions of naira has been lost by people in Nigeria to kidnapping. The payment of ransom for kidnapping has depleted the purchasing power of affected households and reduced their investment capacity. The results of the analysis of theme five show that the Nigerian security architecture and capacity to guarantee the security, peace and well-being of the people in Nigeria is weak, fragile and limited. The Nigerian police force suffers from inadequacy of personnel and is thus ineffective in fighting banditry activities. Although the military has been brought in to complement the police, the various joint operations and air bombardments have only yielded momentary success. The military lacks adequate

manpower to commit to fighting banditry as they are almost in every part of the country fighting criminal gangs, terrorism, oil thieves and others. The existence of large ungoverned areas especially in the Northern part of the country has provided a haven for bandits and criminal gangs to habit breed and carry out their activities. It also provided the bandits the opportunity to relocate from one place to the other and to evade and avoid attack by the Nigerian security force. Thus the incapacity of the Nigerian security forces to effectively check banditry in Nigeria has left the state fragile and has created an environment and sense of insecurity in the people living in Nigeria. The results of these five align with research question and objective three.



The results from the thematic constructs have dire implications and consequences for Nigeria's National security. National security in the context of the study encompasses the state-centric security and human security frameworks. National security encompasses the concepts of military security, economic security, environmental security, cyber security, political security, and energy and natural resources security (Longley, 2021). It is the responsibility of the state to ensure the provision and management of the above-mentioned elements or variables of security. It is from these elements that the concept of human security is gleaned. The concept of state-centric security expanded to accommodate the provision of security to encompass all spectrums of human well-being. Thus, human security embodies the individual and the society in areas of economy, environment, food, health, personal security, community security, and political security (United Nations, 2018).

These core elements of human security are categorized into three broad divisions. These are the assurance or provision of security to ensure that human survival is protected and promoted, thus ensuring freedom from fear, the provisions for human's daily needs, that is, freedom from want, and the protection and promotion of human dignity (United Nations, 2018). As shown from the results of the study, it is apparent that the security forces and by extension the Nigerian state have failed to provide effective military protection to the people living in Nigeria. This failure has resulted in a myriad of crises and problems of human environmental insecurity, economic insecurity, personal insecurity, physical insecurity, and others. Banditry activities in Nigeria have caused many people to live in constant fear of attack, death, or being kidnapped and exploited to pay ransom. These criminal activities have limited the freedom of people to move from place to place in Nigeria and have hampered economic and agricultural activities.

The problem of insecurities is thus, the bane of National security. The reality is that Nigeria is faced with challenges of economic insecurity, environmental insecurity, natural resources insecurity, and human insecurity that could result in political instability and legitimacy crisis. A state that cannot ensure and assure the protection and promotion of peace, safety and progress of society, cannot earn the loyalty and support of the people.



Conclusion

The study examined the impact of banditry activities on the right to life, personal safety and freedom of movement of people in Nigeria between 2014 and 2022. It also examined the effect of the criminal activities of bandits on Nigeria's national security. The study set forth basic research questions and research objectives which have been successfully answered and achieved. The results from the analysis show that banditry has negatively affected the rights, freedom and progress of people in Nigeria and National security. The analysis from relevant literature shows that thousands of people have been killed by bandits, thousands of others displaced, thousands kidnapped and billions of naira lost to kidnapping. The Nigerian Federal government and various states government have made several efforts to curtail the activities of the bandits and other criminal gangs operating in Nigeria, but their efforts have been retarded by inadequate personnel and the existence of very large and poorly managed or governed spaces that have provided a haven for various criminalities. Thus, the Nigerian state is faced with various human security and military security challenges that pose serious threats to socio-economic progress, political stability and Sovereignty.

Recommendations

Given the above submission and in line with the findings of the study, the following suggestions towards mitigating the problem of banditry and kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria are made below:

First, the government security forces should be complemented by private security outfits and local vigilantes in all towns and villages in Nigeria. Security management is no longer the exclusive preserve of the state as criminal actors and their activities have become more complicated and sophisticated. The Nigerian state should thus regularize and support the private and local security outfits;



Second, the security and intelligence capacity of the military and the police forces should be built up to effectively manage information and to check the activities of bandits and other criminalities in Nigeria. Without adequate and effective intelligence and information management, the fight against banditry would be very difficult to mitigate;

Third, the state government should run their security outfits to complement the federal government security forces. The various state governments in conjunction with the federal government should establish a joint state security network in each State; comprising of the federal security forces, state security forces, private security forces and the vigilantes or community security networks to simultaneously launch attacks against criminalities from every state-based joint security outfits. Thus a simultaneous security operation would flush out the bandits and other criminal gangs inhabiting the Nigerian forests;

Fourth, the personnel capacity of the military and police forces should be improved to ensure that more security personnel are drafted to combat crime since a portion of the forces, especially the police force, perform other duties like protecting government officials, political elites, companies and private individuals; and

Finally, the Nigerian state should enact a law that would allow people living in Nigeria to carry guns for self-defence. The guns should be licensed. The possession and right to carry guns would limit the incidences of banditry in Nigeria. This would break the monopoly of illegal possession of guns by criminals who usually attack defenceless people at will.

The contributions of the study to extant literature and knowledge are outlined below.

Generally, the study of banditry in Nigeria linked with national security is a contribution to knowledge. Specifically, the study of the impact of banditry on the right to life, personal liberty, progress and freedom of movement of people in Nigeria is a contribution to the extant literature and knowledge. The study was mostly based on desk research. It is envisaged that academics will adopt field research to study the variables of this research in the future. Such a study would



help to further reveal the psychological and emotional trauma suffered by victims of banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria as it concerns the right to life, liberty and freedom of people in Nigeria.

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