

Banditry and its Implication on Political Representation of the Northwestern Region of Nigeria

¹Yusuf Barau Abdulrahman & ²Mubarak Ahmed Mashi

¹Department of Political Science and International Studies,
Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Kaduna, Nigeria

²Department of Political and Defence Studies, Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna

Article DOI: 10.48028/iiprds/ijcsird.v9.i1.10

Abstract

The paper examined the implication of insecurity on political representation in the North-western region of Nigeria. Insecurity which has manifested in the form of banditry is caused by many factors central among which is the lopsided economic organisation of the country, the peasant's communities in terms of providing them with necessities of life, such as; access to education, health facilities, meaningful and gainful employment, and adequate political representation. This becomes alarming and a threat to political stability that serves as an implication for political representation. During this study, data was sourced from two major sources: the Secondary and the Primary Sources. The Secondary sources were from existing literature on insecurity and political representation while the interview method and Questionnaire were adopted as the main primary source of data. The questionnaires distributed were 360 of which 345 copies were retrieved, and 21 respondents were used for the interviews conducted, three from each state with a total number of 366 respondents across the two methods adopted, to generate data from the selected key informants across the region. In addition, descriptive analysis method was adopted to present and analyze data based on study's objectives. Within the theoretical framework of conflict, the study finds out that insecurity has affected the political representation of the region as a result there is wide gap between the elected representatives and the general public, in some areas the voters were disenfranchised as a result of security threats to the voters and less presence of security personnel in the conflict areas which allowed the bandits to attack various communities at will. Based on the findings, the study suggests that the security architecture of the country should be redesigned to integrate the traditional security forces, adequate security presence in the rural areas, adopt an approach to tackling insecurity, synergy amongst the security agencies, and quick intervention from Governments.

Keywords: *Banditry, Insecurity, North-West, Politics, Representation, Voters*

Corresponding Author: Yusuf Barau Abdulrahman

Background to the Study

Security challenges has become part of the contemporary realities of Nigeria. Since the return of democratic rule in the country in 1999, the country has been dominated by adjectives of crisis, conflict and violence, as if democratization is synonymous with these frightening waffles. The little progress achieved upon the return of democratic politics in the country has been shattered and mired by incessant inter-communal clashes, insurgencies, militarism and violent agitations that have threatened the structural foundation of Nigeria (Moses, 2021). These security challenges have led to the political and leadership crisis, the loss of lives and properties, loss of livestock, displacement of people, disruption of farming, and other socio-economic activities. Evidently, from the South-South Zone with Niger Delta militarism through the South East with violent agitations of the movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) to the North-East with devastating repulsions of Boko Haram terrorism to the North-West being hallowed in rural in rural terror, kidnapping, armed banditry and cattle rustling through the North-Central being mocked by suspicion and uncertainties over ethnic and religious conflicts and farmers-herders clashes, the picture of Nigeria is one of bloodshed (Moses, 2021). A situation like this, if left unresolved, is capable of seriously threatening peaceful co-existence, democratic consolidation and economic meltdown in the entire country.

Banditry in Nigeria has been on the rise since 2015 (Abbass, 2017). Although, historically, it started earlier in Zamfara State around 2011. And, given the increasing and expanding nature of the problem and how rapidly it has been spreading to other neighbouring states of Katsina and Sokoto states (Moses, 2021). This social conflict started as a conflict over access to scarce natural resources between two socio-economic groups that is mobile pastoralists and sedentary farmers, which ultimately resulted to conflict between these two groups that were before living in peace with each other, with a heavy human and economic cost, ranging from the sexual assault on women and girls, attacks on villages, kidnapping for ransom, killings of farmers and herders to cattle rustling, killing of victims in some instances. Banditry as a violent situation unleashed on rural communities which reorganized armed violence through plunder, extortions, armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, raping of women and children, village raids and setting them ablaze, terrorism, illegal mining, the rustling of cattle, and murder as a means of fluid occupation by criminals. Banditry, as one of the insecurity challenges affecting the North-Western region of Nigeria, has recently, been affecting the political representation of the region.

Just as in the North-Eastern region of Nigeria, banditry has become one of the major problems bedevilling some States in the North-Western region of Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto and, Kebbi. These shows that five out of the seven States in North - West are now under their control. The activities of bandits in the affected States have continued to affect the political representation of the region. The rate at which the bandit's activities are escalating is becoming as alarming as it is causing the death, displacement of the peasants within the communities. Despite trends that suggest entrenchment of democratic elections and peaceful regime change at both national and sub-national levels, the democratic institutions of parliament, the judiciary, political parties, and civil society have remained weak in tackling the

situation of insecurity in the country. It is against this backdrop that this paper sought to examine banditry and its implication on political representation in the north western geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Political Representation

Political representation refers specifically to the accountability of an individual or political party to the group of people they are representing. Political representation is also a creative activity in which representatives construct themselves as representatives of minorities and at least partly construe ethnic identities and minority groups by making claims about them and their interests. By making claims about groups, representatives constitute them as a democratic political subject “that becomes recognizable as a unified and not merely aggregated entity only by means of representation (Disch, 2015, p. 490). Representation, is also, when elected representatives are expected to act responsively to the needs of their constituents” (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008, 309).

Insecurity

Insecurity is the state of being subject to danger or injury. The anxiety that is experienced when one feels vulnerable and insecure. It is a state of being not secure or, lack of confidence. Insecurity can constitute a form of attacking individuals or groups causing panic. The concept of insecurity connotes different meanings such as absence of safety; danger; hazard; uncertainty; lack of protection, and lack of safety. For Onifade, Imhonopi and Urim (2013), in Jubril and Jimoh (2020), insecurity is conceived as a situation the where human and national security of a state is compromised by internal or external forces or interests exacerbated by the former's weak or poor economic, military and/or human resource development conditions. Insecurity is an absence of protection or safety. As opined by Achumba et al (2013), insecurity entails peril; death trap; ambiguity; the dearth fortification, and lack of security (Achumba *et al.* 2013). They also discuss the problem of insecurity from the following two major perspectives: Firstly, insecurity is the state of being prone or vulnerable to danger or threat of danger. In this situation, the tendency of experiencing hurt based on insufficient measures against danger is very bright. Secondly, Insecurity is the state of being exposed to risk or anxiety. The exposure could be a result of inadequate measures against insecurity by the state or by a group of people etc. This usually happens when the law enforcement agents are poorly educated, trained, remunerated and motivated. It could also occur when people's“ basic necessities of life are lacking.

Banditry

Banditry is organized armed violence through plunder, extortions, armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, raping of women and children, village raids and setting them ablaze, terrorism, illegal mining, rustling of cattle and murder as a means of fluid occupation by criminals. Bandits can: strain government capacity, challenge the legitimacy of the state, act as surrogate or alternative governments, dominate the informal economic sector and use violence and coercion to compete with legitimate business while avoiding taxes and co-opting government regulators; and infiltrate police and non-governmental organisations to further their goals and in so doing, demonstrate latent political aims (Sullivan, 2012).

Conceptual Review

Political Representation

Political Representation is a household concept that has been defined variously. In a general sense representation means that when a group of people or individuals represents and acts on behalf of a group which is so large that all its members cannot directly participate in its deliberations, then this is the general understanding of representation. In the specific sense, political representation “is the process through which attitudes, preferences, viewpoints and desires of the entire citizenry or a part of them are, with expressed approval, shaped into government action on their behalf by a smaller number among them, with binding effect upon those represented. According to Robert Von Mohl, in Johari (1989), representation, “is the process through which the influence which the entire citizenry or a part of them have upon government action, is with their expressed approval, exercised on their behalf by a small number among them, with binding effects upon those represented” (Johari, 1989). Political representation is the activity of making citizens' voices, opinions, and perspectives “present” in the public policy-making processes. Political representation occurs when political actors speak, advocate, symbolize, and act on behalf of others in the political arena. In short, political representation is a kind of political assistance.

The development of representative government created the potential for modern mass democracy. Instead of directly participating in political decision making as in the Greek polis or the Swiss canton, the public selects legislators to represent them in government deliberations. Citizen control over government thus occurs through periodic, competitive elections to select these elites. Elections should ensure that government officials are responsive and accountable to the public. By accepting this electoral process, the public gives its consent to be governed by the elites selected. The democratic process thus depends on an effective and responsive relationship between the representative and the represented (Johari, 1989).

Much of the existing literature on minority representation assumes that despite internal heterogeneity, the shared experience of structural discrimination allows us to identify a set of essential interests that are common to all members of a minority group. Based on this, the literature suggests that presence of any member of a group in parliament secures presence to the whole group (Anwar, 2001, Celis, Eelbode et al., 2013, Dancygier, 2013, Moser, 2008, Protsyk, Matichescu et al., 2008, Saggat and Geddes, 2000, Schönwälder, 2013, Teney, Jacobs et al., 2010, Togeby, 2008). These representatives are further expected to advance essential minority interests in parliament (Bird, 2011, Celis and Wauters, 2010, Dunning and Nilekani, 2013, Gay, 2007, Jensenius, 2013, Jones, O'Toole et al., 2015, Saalfeld and Kyriakopoulou, 2011).

The process of representation and the representatives are important because the latter act on behalf of people and is responsible of representing their interests and formulating policies in their favour. Further there is the question of the accountability of the representatives to the people that is invariably connected with the ways by which people can exercise control over their representatives. It is not simply majority representation that is important but each and every segment of the society should get a chance to be represented in the legislature (Johari, 1989).

Banditry

The Concept of banditry has been changing over time, space and circumstances. A bandit in the 19th century Europe and Americas a freedom fighter whose aim was partly to ensure the emancipation of the downtrodden from the upper class or colonised over the colonizer (Warto, 1994). Furthermore, bandits like Chucho el Roto, Herachio Bernel and Santanon were often celebrated as heroes of Mexican independence. Therefore, Mexicans have warm regards and respect for those "social regard" termed bandits, while on the contrary, the State often considered them as nuisance and outlaws that need to be era nuisances (Michael, 1987).

In some pre-industrial societies where peasants see bandits differently from the State not as outlaws, hoodlums and miscreants, but as avengers and bread winners". As constructed Hobsbown cited in Kyari, and Chinyere, (2015). "social bandits", as group of peasant outlaws who maintain some respect within peasant society. Bandits are sometimes considered by their people as heroes, champions, avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps even leaders of liberation. Inland any case, they are seen as men to be admired, helped and supported. This description can best be understood within the purview of what Blumell (2007) described as "ancient banditry" or possibly "traditional banditry", which thrived in preindustrial era. This form of bathing industry is different from the nature of modern banditry. Modern -day bandits are more and destructive in nature.

However, a bandit in an African setting is entirely opposite to the Americas, the former specialized in armed robbery and other related crimes (Currott and Fink 2008). The case of Nigeria has clearly shown that banditry is a criminal activity that involve killing, kidnapping for ransom, and destruction of communities. The most common feature of banditry in Africa has been maiming, killing and wanton destruction of properties and hence, it has a direct relationship with cattle rustling (Rufa'i, 2017).

Banditry refers to the practice of stealing cattle and animals from herders, or the raiding of cattle from the ranches. Although driven by different needs and factors, it is increasingly an economically based form of criminality perpetuated by informal networks (Kwaja, 2013). Rural banditry thrives as a means of 'primitive' accumulation of cowherds in the context of subsistence and commercial pastoralism. The most disturbing effect of this banditry is the unsettling of pastoralist transhumant activities. Furthermore, rural banditry is accompanied by rape, kidnapping, organized attacks on villages and communities, and looting (Kuna, 2013).

With the globalisation syndrome, the manifestation of banditry has turned into a global phenomenon. Bandits in the era of globalisation therefore are more than mere rural gangs and criminals. Slatta (1994) was of the opinion that bandits usually operate in the shadows, often on the fringes of society, in geographically isolated areas. Those who operate on that platform are regarded as bad people, who have nothing good to offer society. Banditry is now a sophisticated enterprise with the capacity to challenge the authorities of weak and failing states. The scope, dimension and operational pattern of banditry have been enlarged around the world and particularly in Africa. This therefore have a lot of effect on the agricultural and

economic development of the rural areas in terms of productivity and sustenance. The rural area is so isolated that the presence of security is limited, and it permits the bandits to carry out attacks on communities, farmland, rustle cattle at will.

Nigeria's Security Challenges

National securities are central to the survival and actualization of state policies hence, the development of any given state is hinged on and largely determined by the level of prevailing security both externally and internally (Nwolise, 2002). Security relates to the presence of peace, safety, happiness and the protection of human and physical resources or the absence of crisis (Otto and Ukpere, 2012). While to Akin (2008 cited in Ukpere, 2012), defined security as any laid down procedures towards the protection of persons and property against hostile persons. He further opined and observed that:

It is a situation whereby a conducive atmosphere is created within which people in the state can go about their normal daily activities without threat to either their lives or properties. Thus, security encompasses all approach toward safeguarding human as well as material resources in the state against all forms of aggression or violent conduct (Akin, 2008, cited in Ukpere, 2012).

This is to say security as a general term encapsulate not just the protection of individuals and property against overall survival of the state and a conducive political vis-a-vis economic atmosphere. Security involves gaining a degree of confidence about our relationships that comes through sharing certain commitment with the other actors, which, in turn, provides a degree of reassurance and predictability. This view argues that it is not particular commodities (such as nuclear weapons) that are crucial factor in understanding the security-insecurity equation but rather relationship between the actors concerned (Williams, 2013).

In recent times, Nigeria has been facing several security challenges. These include rise in armed robbery, kidnapping, and insurgency by the Niger Delta militants, ethnic conflicts, activities of the Boko Haram sect, and recently armed banditry most especially in the north western region. Thousands of innocent lives were lost as a result of one violent crime or the other, while property worth billions of naira have also been lost to insecurity in the country. This is the character of Nigeria, which has blurred all the indices of economic growth and development and also contributed in deepening the crisis of poverty (Moses, 2021: 255).

From national security perspective, it is possible to make several deductions on Nigeria's threat analysis in the last decade. As a sovereign territorial entity, Nigeria faces no existential threat from any of its neighbours, as is the case with say, India and Pakistan, North and South Korea, or Iraq and Kuwait before the first Gulf War. In terms of military and economic capabilities, the country towers over and above all her neighbours in such a way that declaration of open hostility is practically impossible by any of the sub-Saharan countries (Katsina, 2012).

Internally however, no one place is considered totally safe within the country. When those in the southern parts are trying to grapple with kidnapping and other violent crimes, Nigerians in

the North live in utter terror not knowing where and when the next set of bombs will explode. Challenges such as massive corruption, tribalism, poverty, poor governance, near-zero industrial bases, and a single-line economic sector are often described as characteristics of developing countries. While this may be true, it is important to observe that in the case of Nigeria, these characteristics have stayed very long for any purposive drive towards national development. Years of military rule, compounded by an ineffective and corrupt bureaucracy have destroyed, by the end of the last century, any semblance of political accountability and people-oriented leadership (Katsina, 2012).

The country's security challenge took another dimension with the 1 October 2010 bombing near Eagle Square in Abuja, venue of the country's 50th Independence Celebration since then, a series of attacks have occurred in several parts of the country including Suleja, Jos, Kaduna, Maiduguri, Bauchi, and Kano. The country has also witnessed several ethnic and religious crises which appear to be escalating at an intolerable scale. These crises and criminal activities individually and collectively create insecurity and breach of the peace that are likely to or indeed affect legitimate social and economic activities in the country (Abubakar, 2005). The citizens now live between the edges of security uncertainty and vulnerability.

Over six million of sophisticated arms are in the hands of private individuals in Nigeria (Abubakar, 2005). These security challenges have the very damaging consequence of giving the signal to the rest of the international community that Nigeria is not a safe and secure place and as such not suitable for economic investment and activities. This is particularly important in view of the efforts being made to create the desired atmosphere to attract foreign events. Insecurity is a risk factor which investors all over the world dread, as security uncertainty is not only considered a bad omen for business, it sends warning signals to investors to take their investible fund to another country where there is adequate or a semblance of security (Katsina, 2012).

The causes of insecurity within the discourse of security challenges have continue to be a contending issue amongst various scholars, most especially with the way it has continued to cause a serious threat to the peaceful existence of the Nigerian State. Onifade, Imhonopi & Urim (2013), cited in Jubril and Jimoh, (2020) categorised the aetiologies of insecurity within Nigeria in twofold: remote and proximate causes. The remote factors include such causes as absence of institutional capacity resulting in government failure, which Fukuyama (2004) called the breakdown of institutional infrastructures i.e. the ineptitude of the government could be held for the breakdown of security in Nigeria's system. Whereas, immediate and proximate factors according to Achumba et al. (2013) are factors that have contributed to the state of insecurity in the country which include porous borders, rural-urban drift, social irresponsibility of companies resulting in negative externalities which provoke social unrest within their host communities, unemployment, poverty and terrorism, among others (Jubril, & Jimoh, 2020).

The state of insecurity in the North-West region of Nigeria could be attributed to the fragility of Nigerian State. Ncube and Jones (2013, p. 1) defines fragility state as a state that is

"incapable of assuring basic security, maintaining the rule of law and justice or providing basic services and economic opportunities for their citizens."

In the past five years, armed banditry in rural areas seems to have taken on a life of its own, with dire consequences for the citizenry in Nigeria. Many analysts associate the phenomenon of rural banditry with the failure of the State, Ibrahim (2014) to provide security and basic services for the populace. Banditry leads to disruption of life as we know it. The desire to avoid strife and its attendant sequences lead to displacement and loss of lives and properties. Armed banditry also leads to the existence of constant fear of attacks, which take away human dignity and people's ability to organize, seek and engage in livelihoods (This Day, February 3, 2014).

The previous conflict in other countries across the Sahara Desert also allows the exportation of weapons used during the conflicts into Nigeria through the poorly governed borders. For instance, illicit SALWs from post-Gadhafi Libya and other parts of the Maghreb and the Sahel region find their way to the region through the porous borders exploited by criminal syndicates. Availability of such arms coupled with poor regulation of the mining sector aids bandit attacks in States like Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna and Niger State. The activities of illegal gold mining in Zamfara State is viewed as a major factor in sustaining bandit-related attacks and killings in the State. Bandits are known to have vanquished communities and taken over potential mining spots which they exploit themselves. Furthermore, weak regulation of pastoral activities has led to infiltration by livestock bandits, leading to an increase in cattle rustling in the Northwest. The sudden intensification of cattle rustling in States like Katsina, Kaduna and Zamfara, particularly since 2010, is due to a number of interconnected factors.

These include the conflicts between herders and farmers, commercialization of cattle rustling, availability of SALWs, and the emergence of livestock bandits. The existence of large swathes of uncultivated forest reserves, popularly known as Dajin Dansadau, Dajin Maru have always provided hiding places for bandits. These areas offer perfect hideouts, where bandits could reside for months to organise their terrible activities (Moses, 2021). Others are Kumuku and Kuduru, Kuyambana, Sububu, Dajin Rugu and Burwaye forest are some of the deadliest enclaves of armed banditry in the region.

Bandits are also linked to local and transnational organized crime networks and markets for the sale of stolen cattle. Many of the rustled cattle have been disposed of in many markets of major Nigerian cities, including Maiduguri (Borno State) and Agege (Lagos State) through criminal intermediaries (ICG, 2020 in Jubril & Jimoh, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

The Conflict Theory

Conflict theory is a philosophy that originated from the works of Karl Marx (1818-1883). In conflict theory, Marx claimed that society is in a state of conflict due to competition for social and economic resources. Social order is maintained by domination and power rather than a general agreement. According to conflict theory, those with the most resources use wealth and power to suppress poor and powerless people for their own betterment that leads to inequality

and power struggle (Rummel, 1977). Conflict theory believes that crime is caused by social and economic forces operating within society. Human behaviour is influenced by conflict between various groups in society. Marx believes that struggle or conflict among classes was an inevitable feature of capitalism based on the various groups in a society or social classes perpetually fight and compete for resources and power, hence the groups remain polarized against each other.

In consideration to Marx exponential understanding of conflict, Weber's beliefs about conflict extend beyond Marx in that they suggest that some forms of social interaction, including conflict, generate beliefs and solidarity between individuals and groups within a society. In this way, an individual's reactions to inequality might be different depending on the groups with which they are associated, whether they perceive those in power to be legitimate, and so on (Coser, 1964). Dahrendorf (1959) put forward some of the elements of conflict drawing from the works of Marx: Social order is maintained by force from the top, tension is constant, extreme social change happen at any time, there cannot be conflict unless some degree of consensus has already been established, once reached, conflict temporarily disappear (Dahrendorf, 1959). He further asserted that conflict can be regulated through negotiation, mediation, arbitration etc, on that assertion, he gave the following functions of conflict:

1. Conflict establish identity.
2. Conflict serves as safety value to hold the group together.
3. Conflict increases group cohesion.
4. Conflict helps in testing the strength of individuals and groups.
5. Conflict spurs needed change.

The three basic assumption of conflict theory are:

- 1- Between individual or group, conflict emerges from having opposing interests or competing for limited resources.
- 2- Struggle and conflict typically lead to some groups and individuals controlling and dominating others, and that patterns of subordination and domination are self-perpetuating.
- 3- Dominant groups disproportionately influence resource allocation and societal structure.

Criticism of Conflict Theory

Despite the relevance of the theory in explaining the security issues, the theory is also criticized on certain ground. Some of the critics of conflict argue that Conflict theory was criticize for ignoring stability. As argued, history is made up of both periods of upheaval and periods of stability. By focusing only on conflict and strife, and ignoring the long stretches of peace and stability, the conflict theory takes a partial view of history and human society, akin to focusing only on the troughs of a waveform and ignoring the crests. Also, the Consensus Theorists forward their argument on the criticism of the Conflict theory. The theory states that human beings are almost as likely, if not more, to cooperate with each other to distribute scarce resources justly, rather than engage in conflict and attempt to subjugate the other (Huntington, 1993).

Relevance of the Theory

Within the context of this study, it is important to acknowledge the fact that the situation of Banditry as it affects the political representation can be synthesized into conflict theory which is expressed in violent conflict. Based on the assumption, the incidence of banditry can be accepted as a conflict issue which needs utmost emergency responses from the government. As conflicts are inevitable, the theory deeply helps in understanding the contending issues that exist within social groups which has led to various confrontations in the form of violent conflict.

Political Representation and Insecurity

From the picture of the high level of insecurity in Nigeria pointed above, it is easy to see how it can serve as a challenge to the political representation in the country. The various issues that have to do with lack of adequate political representation being faced by the country have been attributed to insecurity in many cases. The situation whereby majority of the people are poor and vulnerable to insecurity, displacing them from their community and region as a result of fear of being attacked, will doubtlessly, affect their political participation and representation. In other words, the process of turning the North-West region into an axis of rural terror and killing field could be explained emphatically within the context of the crude crisis of governance catapulted rapidly by politicizing the act of violence conflict through the centripetal and centrifugal forces of corruption and disempowerment. Perhaps, as a strategy of actors perpetuating themselves in power (Moses, 2021). Considering the statement of an informant who stated that:

"Like the people we sent as our political representatives, most of them are not staying with us here, they do not know our problems, their children do not know our children, their only interest is because they have godfathers, our community leaders will just make all the necessary arrangements for them, and when they get what they want, they will go away and leave us. So because of that, nobody you will see officially that you sent to represent you and he does it" (Interview, 24th August, 2023). As opined by Danjibo (2008) it is now the norm to see thousands of the farmers and herders turn to Internally Displaced Persons within their own country and locality. The high rate of insecurity and violence in Nigeria reflects long accumulated conflict between and among various groups and fuelled by the political ruling elite for a cheap way of maintaining the status quo (Danjibo, 2008 p 8). This suggests that the insecurity situation also has a political dimension to it, it goes beyond what is in the surface to a more politically conspired phenomenon in order to score cheap political gains.

Clapham opined that "the breakdown of law and order on African continent was basically, the result of the legacy of bad governance" (Clapham, 2002, 14). The Niger Delta militancy, O'dua Youth restiveness, Bakassi and Egbesu boys' dilemma and Boko Haram sectarian violence are traceable to bad governance. Commenting on poverty-unemployment relationship and interface, the former governor of Rivers State Rotimi Amaechi, asserts that the phenomena are "responsible for high rate of insecurity in Nigeria buttressing his point, he claimed that until we deal with the issues of poverty, wealth creation and unemployment, then we may be able to solve the problem of insecurity" (Amaechi, 2013, 11). Thus, when

government cannot and provide basic necessities of life to its citizens in terms of education, adequate food, water, healthcare and security of life and property, such a government is not only useless, but a shadow of one.

Regrettably, situation of this nature has a serious consequence of affecting the political representation of the rural societies. Further analysis shows that the prevailing insecurity in the form of banditry which is increasing on daily basis continue to pose serious threat on the political representation of the North-West Nigeria. It is on this basis that Abubakar (2019) made some assertion on some of the implication of banditry in West African sub-region with consequence on regional integration of West Africa including the radicalization of youth, increase rate of youth unemployment and their subsequent involvement in illicit guns and narcotic drug trade the sub-region. The emergence of network of miscreant's groups, gradual collapse of agricultural and livestock development with effect on income, trade and commerce and proliferation of small firearms and light weapon, bastardization of traditional institutions (Abubakar, 2019, p 644).

Strategies for Tackling Insecurity

The irreducible function of the state is to continually secure itself against internal insurrection and external aggression by providing the security of lives and property of citizens. Ideological differences notwithstanding, this is the state's most critical defining function. The “monopoly of the legitimate” use of force by which the state is defined- to defend itself against possible external aggression- and to secure its citizens against competing users of instrument of force speaks precisely to this point. This is the only way the state harvests in return the loyalty of its citizens, which translates into high degree of legitimacy and the ready inclination to obey its laws (Sofiri, 2020).

The Federal Government's response had been largely through deployment of state security forces. Consequently, “Operation Safe Haven” was created for the North-Central and stationed in Plateau State with areas of operation extending to Benue, Kogi, Nasarawa and Kwara states to quell ethno-religious conflicts and other criminal activities are cardinal evidence in this regard. Other government's response includes constitution of Commissions of inquiry and humanitarian assistance to persons displaced by the conflict. In addition, some State governments in the zone drawing inspiration from the Niger Delta situation have also initiated amnesty programmes - Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) - as forms of pardon for repentant warlords, yet conflicts and insecurity continue to impact on inhabitants of the zone (Sofiri, 2020:34). Taking the assertion of a security personnel into cognizance on the role of government in reducing the security challenges in an interview, (2021) he asserts that "as you said, from the government perspective, government has a lot of responsibility; a lot of roles to play in this because it is the major stakeholder. Some of the solutions are economic, some are social, and some are political" (Interview, 8th October, 2021).

Because the nomads and herders are being neglected for so many years, nobody is looking after them. Nobody cares about their education, their welfare, where to even settle them; they are just left to their own mercy. So they go around without education, without anything, as if

they are not part of us. That is the consequence of what we are reaping and so many injustices have been made against them, so many things that led to the cause of this. So, government must provide a good environment where they can take care of these nomads. Taking care of their social, economic and other aspects of life. Government should be able to provide so many things for them (Interview, 8th October, 2021). For the North-West, “Operation Sharan Daji and Operation Harbin Kunama II was established to battle armed bandits, cattle rustlers and robbers operating particularly in Zamfara, Kaduna and fringes of Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina and Kano States, yet the conflicts continue. Government's review of the escalation of insecurity in the zone resulted in the launching of a new operation on Thursday, June 4, 2020 codenamed “Operation Accord” was launched on Thursday, June 4, 2020, to wipe out banditry, Kidnapping and other criminality from the North-West and North- Central part of Nigeria. The operation was promptly planned by the military high command of the armed forces of Nigeria to tackle banditry and other violent crimes in the area. The troops through land and air offensives successfully neutralized 392 bandits and other criminal elements since the commencement of the operation in the two zones (Killte, 2020, cited in Sofiri, 2020). Commenting further on the measures adopted in reducing the incidence of insecurity in North-west, security personnel (interview, 2021) comments that:

Right now, operations are ongoing, bandits are being arrested, and some of them are being prosecuted as we speak. With the seizure of network, it has greatly enhanced the security arrangement in the area. In the last two weeks or thereabout, there is no issue of bandit related activities in those areas as we speak. (Interview, 12th October, 2021).

On the same note, the former Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Tukur Yusufu Buratai flagged off Operation SAHEL SANITY on the 6 July, 2020 as part of activities of the Nigerian Army Day celebration, 2020 during which the Nigerian Army Super Camp IV Faskari in Katsina State was established. The aim of the operation is to support Operation HADARIN DAJI in stemming the tides of the activities of armed bandits, cattle rustlers, kidnappers, incessant killings in the North-West zone of the country. These acts of criminality orchestrated by the bandits had before now crippled the political representation, social and economic activities of the people of this zone.

On the same note, considering the role of informants on worsening the security situation in North-western region of Nigeria, (security, 2021) further asserts that informants are treated like bandits, informants are even worse than bandits because they give information about our troops and other security personnel's movement, the numbers of the troops that are engaged in whatsoever activity, with which they are strategically located. And they disguise as people within us not knowing that they give information. So, we treat them even worse than the bandits whenever we catch them and we take the same procedure. If we arrest you as informants, we take you to Police or DSS, they will in turn charge you to court or does other further necessary action as they deemed fit. (Interview, 12th October, 2021).

Likewise, in a separate interaction with other security personnel (interview, 2021), he also asserts that

In most cases, the security agencies collaborate with the traditional heads, and the traditional head will create awareness on the dangers of informants in the community or in the society. They give the security personnel reliable and timely information about these informants. Once we get these informants, we sink into action. We arrest them, and we investigate. If they are not informants, we release them, but if they are, we take them to the higher level for further investigation and trial. (Interview, 7th October, 2021)

The people of the North-West zone felt the immediate impact of the operation with the tremendous success achieved within the short period of time. Eighty bandits were killed, 33 suspects arrested, 943 cows, 633 sheep/ram recovered and 7 AK47 rifles, one GPMG, 16 Dane guns were captured in the onslaught against bandits in Katsina State by troops of Operation Sahel Sanity. 17 kidnap victims were also rescued, while 14 bandits' informants and collaborators were arrested. In addition, several bandits' camps including the notorious Dangote Triangle and their logistics bases were destroyed within the first month of the anti-bandit operation codenamed Operation Sahel Sanity (Nddi, 2020, cited in Sofiri, 2020:34). Prior to the creation of the above Special Security Forces, "Operation Mesa" had been operating as a nationwide security taskforce. It is called "Operation Yaki" in Kaduna State and "Operation Zenda" in Benue State.

On the side of the needs of the security personnel, in order to effectively tackle the incidence of banditry, the security personnel further opine that "the measures to be taken are simple. First, it is on the part of the government. The government must provide the security with arms, because due to the proliferation of arms from Libya, arms are already in the hands of the bandits. So, the government has used dialogue and so many measures but up to today, the incidence is persisting. The main important factors that can eliminate banditry are: They should use security personnel to flush out these bandits in the forest, the use of traditional rulers; they should be given a full hand in terms of security issues if the government really wants to eradicate it. The Fulani's that engage in these activities that is from the grassroots should be educated. If possible, social amenities should be provided to them. That is in terms of dams, schools, animal clinics and so on" (Interview, 7th October, 2021). Despite the strategies adopted by various security networks, the situation of banditry continues to persist, this is as a result of difficulties attached to penetrating the large ungoverned forest land covering the North-west region that continue to comfortably serve as a potential hideout to the bandits since the securities are finding it difficult to access the forest. As noted, Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016, 98-99),

Reluctance of the Nigerian security operatives to enter these forests areas seems to be largely due to inefficiency, collaboration and corruption. First, one major consequences of the lack of equipment and poor motivation for the Nigerian security forces is gross inefficiency. The Nigerian security operatives are ill-equipped and ill-motivated, in contrast, the criminals are well armed and motivated. Secondly, security forces and rustlers are often cohorts. This seems

obvious given the open manner of rustling and the reluctance of the security operatives to act, even when provided with intelligence by local residents. A third issue is corruption (Olaniyan and Yahaya, 2016, pp.98-99). This is in agreement with the assertion of an informant in Katsina State who assert that: “They should all go to the forest. How is it possible that the security will be in town and the bandits are in the forest? What we use to know is that securities are taken to the forest for training. If the security will be deployed to the forest, military based should be establish in the forest the bandits will never attack the people again” (Interview, 24th August, 2023).

Discussion of Findings

The major findings of the study after conducting extensive research on the subject matter have come up with the following findings on the implication of banditry on political representation in the North-western region of Nigeria. The study finds out that there is less presence of security personnel in the rural areas of North-western region of Nigeria that has the highest number of voters. This has given the bandits the opportunity to attack various communities at will. Despite the deployment of various security personnel and the Army Super Camp in Faskari town, that does not deter the bandits to continue causing havoc in many communities across Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara, Kebbi and Sokoto State. Despite the efforts of both the State and Federal Governments, there are still communities across the affected State that are under the control of bandits. This makes these places no-go areas and a flashpoint of banditry. The rural dwellers of these communities are left with no option than to surrender to the will and conditions given to them by bandits. This has been a threat to political representation as many voters have been displaced, some killed.

The study also discovers that the number of displaced persons is increasing on daily basis as the bandits up to this moment continue to ransack various communities in the affected States. This situation further sends many to neighbouring States that have less security challenges where these displaced persons (mostly widows whose spouses have been killed by bandits) who engage in streets begging as the only viable means for survival. The researcher also agrees after going through various affected communities that the situation is becoming worrisome as both the government and the security agencies are yet to find a lasting solution to the menace. The incessant attacks on the rural communities do not only cause the displacement of people, but also constitute disenfranchisement of eligible voters, threats to life as many peasants have been killed by the bandits.

Conclusion

In conclusion, insecurity which is manifested in the form of banditry which started with cattle rustling has metamorphosed into an economically based form of criminality; incorporating into it kidnapping, arson, rape, armed robbery, killing of innocent citizens and other forms of vileness. The incidence has succeeded in destroying many communities of the North-western region of Nigeria such as; Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara, Kebbi and Sokoto State. This situation has caused the displacement of thousands of eligible voters and destruction of many polling units in the affected communities within these States.

Insecurity has seriously affected the political representation of the North-western region of Nigeria. This can be seen in the absent of development in the communities affected by the incessant banditry attacks that caused serious declined in voters turnout as a result of the insecurity of the voters. The activities of bandits in the region have caused an increase in human displacement. The situation has increased the high rate of poverty, unemployment and political instability as the majority of the people of the area have left to neighboring states, and this have affected their participation in politics and other socio-economic activities.

Recommendations

1. The level of inequality between the peasants and the city dwellers should be reduced in terms of providing them with social amenities and job opportunities. This will help in reducing the level of poverty and unemployment which trigger many rural dwellers to be lured into criminal activities.
2. The Government at all levels should properly educate the rural dweller on the implication of insecurity, the danger of associating with the criminals as an informant, and also how to quickly respond to incidence of insecurity through prompt reporting of the movement of strangers within and outside the communities. This will help in reducing the activities of bandits that is affecting political representation in the region.
3. The government must incorporate the traditional rulers at various levels, the vigilante groups and other members of the communities into the fight against insecurity. This is because the traditional rulers are closer to the people and can effectively contribute by providing the security agencies with information on the influx of strangers in their various communities.
4. There should be adequate support and intervention of the Federal, State, and Local Government authorities in the fight against rural banditry. Through that, the security can be easily mobilized for quick response to discreet calls. Because presently, the security personnel only receive orders from the Federal Government before engaging in field operation, this process has left the State Government with less power to tackle the menace of insecurity.
5. Adequate security personnel and logistics should be provided in the flashpoint areas where the bandits have turned into their den. This will help the security to confront the bandits that are coming in many to attack communities. This appropriately help in reducing the security situation in the North-western region of Nigeria.

References

- Abbass, I. M. (2017). No retreat no surrender conflict for survival between the Fulani pastoralist and farmers in Northern Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal*, 8(1), 331-346.
- Abbass, I. M. (2014). *The political economy of rural development in Nigeria*, Ahmadu Bello University Press Ltd. 143-144
- Abubakar, A. (2005). *The challenges of security in Nigeria*, Available from: <http://www.dawodu.com/abubakar1.htm> (accessed 03 March 2012).
- Abubakar, A. (2019). Rural Banditry, Regional Security and Integration in West Africa, *Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(3), 644-654.
- Achumba, I. C., Ighomereho, O. S., & Akpan-Robaro, M. O. M. (2013). Security challenges in Nigeria and the implications for business activities and sustainable development, *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 4(2), 79-99.
- Alberts, I., Esclebor, W., & Dnjibo, N. (2012). *Peace, security and development in Nigeria*, Abuja: Society for Peace Studies and Practice.
- Ameachi, R. C. (2013). *Poverty, unemployment responsible for high rate of insecurity in Nigeria*, A keynote address delivered at University of Port-Harcourt. Rivers. Nigeria.
- Clapman, W. (2002). *Problem of peace enforcement*. In Zack-Williams, T et al (eds), Lesson to be drawn from Multinational Peace Keeping Operation in ongoing conflict in Africa.
- Curott, N. A. & Fink, A. D. (2010). Bandit heroes: Social, mythical or rational“ *the American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Available online.
- Coser, L. A. (1964). *The function of social conflict*, Free Press.
- Dahrendorf, R. G. (1959). *Class and class conflict in industrial society*, London.
- Hobolt, S. B. & Robert, K. (1969). Government responsiveness and political competition in comparative perspective, *Comparative Political Studies*, 41(3), 309-337.
- Huntington, S. (1996). *The clash of civilization and the remaking of the world order*, New York. Simon and Schuster.
- Ibrahim, J. (2014). Pastoralists, transhumance & rural banditry in Nigeria. *Premium Times*, March 4. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/.../157305-pastoralisttranshumance-and-rural-banditry> Retrieved March 23, 2014

- Interviews and Questionnaire. (2010). *Impact of rural banditry on the agricultural development of Katsina State, A Case Study of Faskari Local Government Area*. Master of Science Degree Dissertation. Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.
- Interviews and Questionnaire. (2023). *Study on the impact of banditry on political representation in some selected communities in North-west region of Nigeria*.
- Jubril, B. & Jimoh, R. (2020). Geography and Insecurity in Northern Nigeria. *International Journal of Research in Geography*, 6(2), 43-51.
- John, W. M. (1966:4). *The economics of agricultural development*, Cornell University Press Ltd. London.
- Johari, J. C. (1989). *Principle of modern political science*, Sterling Publishers Private Limited. India.
- Kuna, M. J. & Ibrahim, J., eds. (2016). *Rural banditry and conflicts in Northern Nigeria*, Abuja: Centre for Democracy and Development.
- Katsina, A. M. (2012). Nigeria's security challenges and the crisis of development. Towards a new framework for analysis. *International Journal of Development Societies*, 1(3), 107-117.
- Kwaja, M. A. C. (2013). *Trends and patterns of violence and insecurity in Plateau State, Presentation at the peace architecture dialogue (PAD)*, Search for Common Ground.
- Kyari, M., & Chinyere, A. (2015). Social impact of rural banditry. In M. J. Kuna and J. Ibrahim (Eds.), *Rural Banditry and Conflicts in Northern Nigeria* (167 -188). Abuja: Centre of Democracy and Development (CDD).
- Moses, T. A. (2021). *Land resource-based conflicts in Nigeria*, Aminu Kano Center for Democratic Studies. Mambayya House. Nigeria.
- Nwolise, O. (2013). *Is physical security alone enough for the survival, progress and happiness of man? University of Ibadan Inaugural lecture*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.
- Ncube, M. & Jones, B. (2003). Drivers and dynamics of fragility in Africa, *Africa Economic Review* 4(5), 1-16.
- Otto, G., & Ukpere, W. (2012). National Security and Development in Nigeria. *African Journal of Business Management*, 6(23), 6766-6770.
- Olaniyan, A. & Yahaya, A. (2016). Cows, bandits and violent conflicts: Understanding cattle rustling in Northern Nigeria, *Africa Spectrum*, 53(30), 98-99.

- Rufai, M. A. (2016.). The role of vigilante groups in the fight against rural banditry in Zamfara State, North-Western Nigeria". In *Degel Journal of the Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto (UDUS), Nigeria*. Forthcoming
- Rummel, R. J. (1977). *Understanding conflict and War: Conflict in perspective*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publication, vol. 3.
- Slatta, R. C. (1994). *Banditry in Peter N. Sterns, ed.*, Encyclopaedia of Social History, New York: Garland, U.S.A.
- Sofiri, J. (2020). Nigeria's security contemporary challenges: Herders-farmer conflicts and banditry, *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 10(17), 27-38.
- Sullivan, J. P. (2012). From drug wars to criminal insurgency: Mexican cartel, criminal enclaves and Criminal insurgency in Mexico and Central American, and their implications for Global Security. VORTEX Working Papers, No.6, Bogoto, Colombia.
- Thisday, (2014). *When armed robbers raid villages*, <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/when-armed-robbers-raid-villages/1679974> Retrieved February 3, 2015
- Warto, P. A. (1994). The social banditry in the rural areas of rembang by the end of the 19th century and at the Beginning of the 20th century, *International Journal for History Studies*, 3(1).