

An Examination of State's Failure in the Performance of Security Responsibility in the North-West Geopolitical Zone

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Abstract

This research examined the historical and sociopolitical contexts that supported banditry in North West Nigeria. The study's main goals are to (a) emphasize the state's failures to provide security and fulfil its responsibilities to inhabitants, (b) examine government-socioeconomic links, and (c) suggest solutions. This study employed qualitative research and reviewed the collection of documentary data. Textual research using numerous sources and statistics revealed the development of banditry in the studied area, as well as the Nigerian state's security failure. The study found that banditry has increased in Nigeria, particularly in the northwest, causing economic upheaval and death. Many see these attacks as the rise of non-state entities eroding state control over violence. Banditry in the region has far-reaching consequences beyond security. Banditry in North West Nigeria is a major issue that highlights the state's security failures. Unpacking the sociohistorical reasons that caused this crisis shows that banditry must be understood in the context of government, socio-economic issues, and community dynamics. The Nigerian state must address banditry in the North West through security, socio-economic development, law enforcement, and community participation. Although the state has addressed these widespread issues, major challenges persist. To reverse insecurity, the Nigerian government must undertake comprehensive initiatives that address banditry's root causes. By encouraging community participation, investing in socio-economic initiatives, and strengthening anti-corruption law enforcement, Nigeria can make the North West and the nation safer. Banditry prevention must address economic inequity, state capability, and community cohesion.

Keywords: *Insecurity, Banditry, Socio-security, Nigeria-State & North-West Region*

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Background to the Study

The escalating insurgency, terrorism, arm robbery, kidnappings, corruption, and ethnic crisis in Nigeria pose a significant threat to the security of life and property. The lack of security for citizens' lives and property severely hinders meaningful development. A climate of fear will frighten domestic and foreign investors. At the heart of many of these conflicts is access to resources and control over the distribution of benefits. This struggle for resources has led to a broad sense of insecurity, opportunism, and the pursuit of self-help strategies across the country. Some of the causes of violence include godfatherism, poverty, unemployment, money and politics, corruption, small and light arms proliferation, the rise of armed groups, religious-based violence, and election fraud. These issues represent dividing lines in communities that have led to heightened tensions between and within groups (Ujah, Uloko, Egwemi-Ugbeda Obi, Ataja, and Ojochogu, 2023).

Rising incidents of banditry, particularly in the North West region, have plagued Nigeria in recent years (2015-date). Banditry, characterized by violent theft and kidnapping for ransom, has contributed to insecurity, displacement, and the fragmentation of communities. Bandits, also known for their theft of property, extortion, and sometimes violence, have left an indelible mark on society throughout history. While often romanticized in literature and popular culture, the realities of banditry are dire and multifaceted, impacting socio-economic structures, community safety, and governance. Banditry in North West Nigeria has evolved into a critical challenge for both the local populace and governance structures. Interwoven with issues of poverty, unemployment, and ineffective law enforcement, banditry has resulted in fatalities, kidnappings, and the displacement of communities. The geographical expanse of the region, combined with its vast ungoverned spaces, has allowed criminal elements to flourish, undermining the state's authority. The Nigerian state, primarily through its government and security apparatus, has a crucial role to play in addressing this pressing issue (Ujah, Uloko, Egwemi-Ugbeda Obi, Ataja, and Ojochogu, 2023). This paper aims to evaluate the responsibilities of the Nigerian state in combating banditry in the North West, outlining existing challenges, evaluating current measures, and proposing effective strategies for resolution. By understanding the role of the state, its responsibilities, and its challenges, we can work towards sustainable solutions to restore peace and security in the region.

Conceptual Review

Banditry in North West Region

Despite its rich cultural legacy and diverse ethnic groups, the North West region of Nigeria persists in grappling with a complex array of socioeconomic challenges. Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara are the six states that make up this region, which is characterized by a unique combination of agricultural vigour and serious socio-political problems. One of the reasons agriculture plays such an important part in the economy of that region of Nigeria is the sizeable fraction of the population that engages in farming. According to the World Bank, the North West region of Nigeria is one of the most agriculturally productive areas in the country, and it makes a significant contribution to the country's supplies of staple foods (World Bank, 2021). The region is well-known for the production of crops like maize, millet, sorghum, and rice, in addition to the farming of cattle. Despite the

abundance of natural resources, the region's agricultural potential remains largely untapped due to the numerous obstacles that hinder its development. The term "banditry" encompasses a broad spectrum of criminal activities, especially those characterized by the use of violence or intimidation for financial gain or other forms of control. It is a grey area within the field of criminology, and it frequently intersects with a variety of unlawful economic activities. These activities include, but are not limited to, smuggling, cybercrime, drug trafficking, and human trafficking (Williamson, 2019).

Globalisation has expanded the geographical reach of banditry, making it a global problem rather than a regional phenomenon. The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2020) states in its Global Report on Trafficking in Persons that "human trafficking is a crime that exploits women, children, and men for numerous purposes, including forced labour and sexual exploitation." This statement is based on the fact that human trafficking is a crime that exploits several groups of people. The growing networks of organised crime are evidence of how banditry has become ingrained in the fabric of modern economies, thereby undermining legal frameworks and putting social integrity in jeopardy. As the number of armed robberies, kidnappings, and cattle rustlings in North West Nigeria continues to rise, the region becomes increasingly vulnerable to the threat of banditry. The level of insecurity has increased as a result of the state's failure to adequately handle the issue, despite the fact that it represents a substantial security threat. The local population experiences widespread fear and insecurity, hindering both economic and social activities. Reports indicate that bandits and security personnel are accountable for extrajudicial executions, torture, and population displacement. Significant economic losses occurred due to the theft of animals, destruction of property, and obstruction of trade. Communities' forced relocation led to a surge in the migration of individuals to urban areas.

Emergence of Banditry

Societal frameworks frequently exclude certain communities, profoundly embedding the historical origins of banditry. Poverty, insufficient education, and restricted access to legitimate economic alternatives contribute to numerous manifestations of banditry. The rise of organized crime due to socio-economic inequality highlights the cyclical nature of banditry. The emergence of the Italian Mafia in the early 20th century is attributable to economic instability and social disintegration (Paoli, 2003). Furthermore, the advent of technology has allowed for novel manifestations of banditry. Cybercrime, as a contemporary phenomenon, enables individuals or organisations to utilize digital platforms with considerable anonymity and worldwide accessibility. McAfee's analysis projects that cybercrime will cost the global economy an estimated \$10.5 trillion annually by 2025 (McAfee, 2020). This striking statistic demonstrates the evolution of banditry into a digital-age phenomenon, where conventional face-to-face criminal exchanges have been replaced by virtual transactions and engagements.

The occurrence of banditry exemplifies broader socioeconomic problems. The frequency often indicates systemic weaknesses in social, economic, and political frameworks. Analyzing the socio-economic ramifications of banditry reveals interrelated concerns about poverty,

injustice, and social justice. Poverty and social inequality often serve as the foundation for the proliferation of banditry. In areas with limited economic opportunities, individuals may resort to illicit activities as a means of survival. Insufficient access to quality education or vocational training intensifies this, thereby perpetuating the cycle of poverty (Massey, 2009). The economic dimensions of banditry suggest that individuals in despair often perceive criminal activity as a rational decision. In this regard, addressing the root causes of poverty and inequality is essential for combating banditry. The World Bank states, "Reducing poverty and inequality has the potential to significantly diminish levels of crime" (World Bank, 2017). Furthermore, banditry raises questions about social justice and power dynamics within society. Marginalised populations frequently endure the harshest impacts of law enforcement initiatives, while wealthier persons and entities involved in white-collar crime often escape substantial consequences. The Enron case in the early 2000s exemplifies how corporate fraud can result in devastating financial losses, although it frequently garners less public attention than street crime (Healy & Palepu, 2003). This disparity raises ethical questions about crime prevention techniques and the justice system, necessitating a more equitable approach to law enforcement and social intervention.

Manifestations of Banditry

Banditry has many different definitions, just as its manifestations do. We can distinguish three main types of crime: cybercrime, organised crime, and traditional banditry. These categories each have particular difficulties and ramifications. Plundering and robbery that take place in real locations are considered forms of traditional banditry. This kind of banditry frequently causes panic in local communities, which results in increased security measures and a breakdown in mutual confidence. Poverty and a lack of opportunities often drive people to resort to crime for survival (Venkatesh, 2008). In situations when law enforcement is weak or corrupt, organised crime thrives. Gangs or cartels take root in a community and use violence and intimidation to maintain power. This is best illustrated by the Mexican drug cartels, who operate vast networks of trafficking that traverse international borders, take advantage of legal gaps, and establish an underground economy (Rosenblum & Sinha, 2005). "Organised crime groups are highly structured and disciplined, reflect a transnational network, and are involved in various illegal activities, including drug trafficking, human smuggling, and money laundering," according to a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) report (FBI, 2019). Such structured networks have an influence on the local economy and pose a threat to national security, which calls for a coordinated international response. Cybercrime is one of the most advanced forms of banditry in today's world. It includes a variety of actions such as credit card fraud, identity theft, and hacking. Because of the internet's ability to provide anonymity, thieves have become braver, and cybercrime has surpassed older types of bandages in frequency. Cybercrime Magazine reports a new cybercrime attack every 39 seconds (Cybercrime Magazine, 2020). This figure emphasizes how urgent it is to combat cybercrime, which is a crucial facet of banditry. Such atrocities have a huge emotional and financial cost. In addition to suffering from financial losses, victims frequently experience psychological trauma, which emphasizes the importance of effective preventative measures and assistance programs for those in need.

Theoretical Framework

It is necessary to employ a number of different theories that are able to capture the sociopolitical, economic, and environmental aspects that are at play in order to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of banditry in North West Nigeria. The conflict theory, the relative deprivation theory, and the social contract theory are the three key ideas that arise from this investigation. An analytical lens that can be used to investigate the reasons for banditry and the responses of the state that follow can be obtained via the utilization of these theoretical perspectives. Individuals agree to give up certain freedoms in exchange for societal stability and order, according to the social contract theory, which was advocated by authors such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Rousseau, 1762, quoted in Obi and Uche, 2019). This idea was expressed by Rousseau. Due to the fact that the state in Nigeria has failed to fulfil fifty percent of this implicit contractual arrangement, there is currently a problem with legitimacy. Residents of North West Nigeria, which is characterized by continuous poverty and marginalization, have been increasingly turning to banditry as a means of assuring their livelihoods and exerting agency (Oluoch, 2022).

The incapacity of the Nigerian state to offer fundamental security, infrastructure, and economic opportunities has resulted in significant unhappiness among the indigenous population. Banditry is transformed into a form of protest against the neglect and ineffectiveness of the state as a result of this unhappiness, which supports the creation of non-state actors who take advantage of the lack of authority that the government possesses. The relative deprivation theory was developed by sociologist Ted Gurr. This theory states that individuals who have a sense of disadvantage in comparison to others are more likely to engage in collective violence. North West Nigeria is characterized by widespread poverty and the wealth of elite players, both of which contribute to the intensification of popular feelings of unfairness and disenfranchisement. Due to the fact that disillusioned young people perceive little opportunities for advancement in the mainstream economy, the enormous socioeconomic imbalance provides a fertile environment for banditry. The Nigerian Bureau of Statistics reports that the region known as the North West has the highest poverty rate in the country. More than seventy percent of the population is considered to be living below the poverty line in this region (NBS, 2023). Due to the pessimism regarding the economy, the cycle of violence is perpetuated, which makes banditry more than just a criminal act but rather a means of survival. The conflict theory, which is primarily associated with Karl Marx, is a theory that emphasizes on conflicts that arise between various social classes and interest groups. It contends that inherent inequalities are the root cause of societal issues (Marx, 1867). In Nigeria, agrarian and pastoral groups are competing for resources, which are leading to an increase in the amount of conflict that occurs over resources, particularly land and livestock. The government's incapacity to adequately control the rising disputes between farmers and herders over land use has resulted in the creation of a violent subculture that frequently views banditry as a necessary response to resource shortages. According to experts, the involvement of armed organisations in these disputes makes the situation even more complicated, which in turn propels legitimate grievances into violent action (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

The purpose of this article is to argue that the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of individuals had a substantial impact on the incidence of banditry in the North West region. It is impossible to place enough emphasis on the fact that the aforementioned theories are applicable to the business challenge that exists in the North West. Bandits and kidnappers in the northeastern region of the United States are yearning for economic independence and social advancement. Those who engaged in illegal activity in the North West viewed commerce as a means to an end. Kidnapping was an illegal action that the criminals engaged in because they were so intent on achieving their goal of becoming wealthy via any means necessary, regardless of the consequences. Bandits and kidnappers in the North West view kidnapping as a means to amass wealth and position themselves as powerful individuals. They should have given up if their objective was only to survive after the first successful attempt at banditry; however, they continue to commit the crime for the purpose of increasing their financial gain even after the first successful attempt.

As an additional point of interest, according to Queer theory, every criminal organisation has a hierarchical organisational structure that is dominated by a powerful leader; they operate in a territory to monopolise the criminal opportunities in that particular geographical area; and they employ violence to enforce their objectives and influence people to comply with their criminal behaviour. The criminal groups that are involved in banditry activities in the North West are characterized by the presence of these essential components. In conclusion, it is sufficient to draw the conclusion that those who engage in banditry in the North West do so because the incentive to do so is very high while the deterrent to criminal living is low. This means that the benefits of committing crime are high while the costs and risks are low, which has served as motivation for criminals. Furthermore, in order to generate income for themselves, they participate in business activities. This is motivated by the lavish and prosperous lifestyles of some of the individuals who are being accused.

Social contract theory elucidates the state's role in security provision by emphasizing critical variables such as governmental legitimacy, public trust, security delivery, and economic opportunities. It posits that banditry emerges when the government neglects its duty to ensure security and fulfill basic needs, leading to the deterioration of the social contract between citizens and the state. This cycle is evident in the ineffective governance and corruption that erode legitimacy, insufficient security measures that create power vacuums, and economic inequality and poverty that foster discontent in the studied region. All of these elements contribute to economic disparity and destitution. The Relative Deprivation Hypothesis posits that perceived inequities arise from ethnic and religious disputes, that economic disparity between the North and South incite animosity, and that the historical marginalization of specific communities exacerbates complaints. This suggests that feelings of deprivation and marginalisation relative to other groups lead to banditry. Moreover, conflict theory focuses on elements such as power dynamics, competition for resources, group identity, and the interaction between the state and socioeconomic institutions. This theory posits that rivalry for land, water, and resources contributes to conflict in the research region. Power conflicts between state and non-state actors intensified the elevated violence within the study's parameters. Additionally, ethnic and religious identities influence group dynamics in the

region under investigation. This hypothesis posits that banditry arises from rivalry for resources, power conflicts, and group identity disputes in the North West area of Nigeria. Consequently, we can assert that the social contract theory and the relative deprivation theory intersect in the North-West region. Perceived governmental inadequacy and inequality are the primary catalysts for banditry in the North West region. Conflict theory underscores the significance of power dynamics and resource struggle in exacerbating banditry. Consequently, tackling the problem of banditry necessitates a comprehensive strategy that includes governmental changes, economic development, and social justice initiatives.

Methodology

As a theoretical paper, it utilized the documentary research method to gather data and analyse the political economics of money politics. The decision to employ documentary analysis was appropriate as the main focus of the work was to discover and choose important material, as well as assess evidence in academic research. Avidime and Obi, (2020) asserted that the documentary analysis method is inherently dynamic, as it can serve as the primary or sole research method. According to Johnson (1984), document analysis is valuable for research that centres on organisational policy or the assessment of government reports. Hakim (2000) and Elton (2002) defined document analysis as the study of information that was created within a specific timeframe on paper. This paper was conducted with the purpose of critically examining the role of the Nigeria-State in performing its security function in North-West Nigeria.

Result and Discussion

Historical Context of Banditry in North West Nigeria

Understanding the historical background of northern Nigeria, characterized for a considerable amount of time by intricate socio-economic dynamics, is essential for understanding the current state of banditry throughout the region. Historically, Fulani herdsman, who were predominantly pastoralists, were involved in disputes with farming communities for the ownership of land and other resources. We can trace these conflicts back to the past. Climate change has compelled herders to move deeper into agricultural regions, leading to desertification and a reduction in the quantity of land suitable for agriculture (Olaniyan, 2021). This has brought about an increase in the severity of these conflicts. Furthermore, the implementation of democratic government in Nigeria has not resulted in the formation of effective local governance or the provision of security for the general populace. We have not achieved either of these outcomes. In the years that followed the conclusion of military governance in the late 1990s, there was a rise in the number of bandits who were active in rural areas around the country. This was because communities were increasingly lacking sufficient governmental representation and the force to maintain law and order (Umar, 2020). This ultimately led to the situation that we found ourselves in. Dissatisfaction with governmental leadership, corruption, and a lack of development have left many communities defenseless and unable to exercise their rights. This has created ideal conditions for the emergence of bandit gangs. Throughout the course of human history, banditry has been associated with social instability as well as economic imbalance. High levels of banditry typically make it difficult for governments to maintain control. As a result, this leads to a weakening of authority and an increase in civil unrest in certain regions.

For instance, bandits in rural England operated against a backdrop of economic destitution and social marginalization among the peasantry throughout the second half of the 18th century (Thompson, 1991). This was prevalent during the time period. Banditry is typically a reaction to systemic injustice, which arises from severe socioeconomic imbalances, and the frequency of this phenomenon lends support to the view that criminal activity is frequently a reaction to such injustice. Banditry is a phenomenon that regularly occurs in modern times in countries that are characterized by significant political instability or where governments are unable to exert control. Banditry is a phenomenon that exists in contemporary times. To provide just one example, the decline of governmental authority in various countries of Africa has corresponded with an increase in banditry in specific places. This is just one example. Harris (2020) asserts that high levels of poverty and a shortage of core services plague these locations, creating a conducive environment for criminal behaviour. These regions frequently grapple with both of these issues. To contextualize contemporary banditry and its vast implications on society, it is helpful to appreciate the historical context.

Causes of Banditry in North West Region

Socioeconomic conditions significantly influence the growth of banditry. North West Nigeria has alarmingly high unemployment rates, especially among young people who often see joining a bandit gang as their only viable means of financial survival (Ibrahim et al., 2023). Opportunities are scarce, and the despair that comes with poverty is increasing, creating a conducive environment for bandit recruiting. The state's past disregard for rural development has only exacerbated tensions. Informal security arrangements are becoming more prevalent since many rural areas feel abandoned by the federal government. Instead of disrupting cycles of violence, these agreements often escalate them through extrajudicial actions (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Therefore, the socioeconomic environment not only encourages banditry but also makes it more challenging for the government to protect its citizens. Nigerian governance has always been characterized by incompetence and corruption, with security agencies routinely accused of incapacity or cooperating with criminal activity. According to reports, police and military personnel frequently lack the resources and training necessary to effectively combat banditry (Okeke, 2022).

When state institutions fail to fulfill their security pledges, a void opens up for bandits to operate. Additionally, there is a rising belief among the populace that the state is indifferent to their predicament. Incidents where security personnel either fail to respond to threats or employ harsh tactics that exacerbate community complaints have reinforced this view (International Crisis Group, 2023). Communities become more and more alienated from security forces as a result of their human rights abuses, which erodes public confidence in the government and increases the use of self-help tools. Ineffective governance and the existence of dishonest officials have undermined law enforcement and public institutions that should provide safety and security. According to the Global Security Index, Nigeria has poor institutional effectiveness and governance (Global Security Index, 2023). Due to the government's failure to address these issues, criminal elements have exploited the void, further intensifying the situation's insecurity.

Impacts of Banditry in North West Region

Banditry in North West Nigeria has significant repercussions. The consequences are severe, including economic instability in local communities and the displacement of entire populations. The fear of assaults inhibits agricultural workers from cultivating their crops, leading to diminished food security and exacerbated poverty levels (Agbo, 2023). Displacement caused by banditry increases the demand on urban centres as displaced individuals seek sanctuary. This often exacerbates the existing socio-economic restrictions in these areas. The persistent violence undermines the educational system and erodes social solidarity within communities. Assaults frequently target educational institutions, resulting in a decline in student graduation rates. Reports show that insecurity stemming from banditry and armed violence has compelled almost one million three hundred thousand children in Nigeria to forgo their school (UNICEF, 2022). The enduring consequences of this educational disruption establish a cycle of poverty and violence that is difficult to dismantle, jeopardizing the future of numerous generations.

One of the most significant effects of banditry is its economic impact. Banditry generates a climate of terror, deterring investment and economic advancement in heavily impacted regions. Businesses may withdraw from or refrain from establishing operations in regions known for banditry, leading to employment losses and diminished income for the local community. A World Bank study (2019) indicates that elevated levels of banditry result in diminished economic growth, hence complicating the ability of local citizens to break free from the cycle of poverty. Banditry incurs more security expenses for both individuals and organizations, resulting in an additional linked cost. The requirement for private security, insurance, and protective measures reallocates funds from productive investments, elevating the overall cost of living and diminishing the revenue available for discretionary expenditure (Briceño & Castillo, 2021). This issue creates a detrimental cycle where economic stagnation encourages banditry, which in turn impedes economic advancement.

Insecurity hinders both economic growth and investment. Agriculturalists are unable to tend to their fields due to fears of assault, leading to food insecurity and economic inflation. The World Bank has indicated that the substantial effects on the agriculture sector, which employs a considerable segment of the North West population, will disrupt several other facets of economic activity (World Bank, 2022). Furthermore, the overall economic activity in the region diminishes as businesses either cease operations or function under heightened anxiety. The repercussions of banditry transcend economic factors, impacting the psychological health of people and entire communities. Residents in impacted regions experience heightened worry and stress due to the ongoing fear of violent crime and theft in their neighborhoods. As individuals become increasingly suspicious of one another in reaction to such challenges, communal trust deteriorates, ultimately leading to social fragmentation (Gordon, 2018). Research indicates that communities afflicted by banditry experience profound trauma and fear, resulting in enduring consequences for mental health (Vanthemsche, 2014). Furthermore, the disintegration of social cohesiveness can result in the erosion of community connections, which are vital for collective action and social support. Community ties constitute the foundation of social support. Consequently, these groups may face greater difficulties in mobilizing against banditry or seeking assistance from authorities, thereby intensifying the cycle of violence and criminality.

The ramifications of precarious circumstances in North West Nigeria encompass various aspects and a wide variety of dimensions. Abductions, which unfortunately have become a societal norm, often fracture families. Kidnappings have forced many young people to forgo their education, particularly when they target educational institutions. The abduction of more than a thousand pupils in Nigeria in 2021 has generated considerable apprehension about the future of education in the area (BBC News, 2021). This deprives children of their right to education and obstructs the development of human capital, which is vital for socioeconomic advancement. Moreover, considerable displacement has transpired because of the lack of security. Families have evacuated their residences, displacing numerous towns to avert additional violence. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) currently classifies over three million individuals in Nigeria as internally displaced. A significant percentage of these individuals reside in the North West region (IDMC, 2023). Displacement leads to overcrowded circumstances in camps, exacerbating existing health issues and fostering an environment susceptible to disease transmission.

The North West's agricultural output is primarily hindered by the instability plaguing the region, particularly due to banditry and conflicts between herders and farmers. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has highlighted that these conflicts have resulted in the significant displacement of agricultural communities, thereby exacerbating food insecurity (OCHA, 2020). Farmers who endure such violent conflicts sometimes struggle to access marketplaces for selling their produce or obtaining necessary supplies, like seeds and fertilizers. Implementing more productive agricultural practices is challenging due to dependence on subsistence farming, compounded by inadequate infrastructure and limited market access, which hinders the transition. Moreover, the impacts of climate change are increasingly evident in the North West region, presenting further challenges for the agricultural sector. Droughts and erratic rainfall patterns have adversely affected crop production, causing farmers to descend further into poverty (Mason, 2017). To address these challenges, it is essential to use innovative agricultural practices. These techniques should encompass drought-resistant crop cultivars and ecologically sustainable farming strategies.

The health statistics gathered in the North West area present a concerning scenario. The National Bureau of Statistics (2019) reports that the region exhibits some of the highest maternal and neonatal death rates in Nigeria. Numerous socio-economic factors often serve as obstacles to healthcare access. The issues encompass poverty, cultural attitudes, and inadequate healthcare infrastructure. The diversion of governmental resources to address insecurity frequently results in insufficient funding for healthcare systems, making them ill-equipped to fulfill the populace's needs. The condition of schooling in this region is equally concerning. The literacy rate is far below the national average due to cultural attitudes toward education and the detrimental effects of insecurity. Many families choose survival over education, viewing the latter as a luxury (UNICEF, 2021). The escalating assaults by armed groups on educational institutions have led to a rise in school closures, thus continuing a cycle of poverty and illiteracy. The Nigerian government and international organizations have noted various results stemming from their initiatives to enhance the educational and

healthcare systems in the North-West region. Corruption, bureaucratic slowness, and persistent security issues are prevalent impediments to the execution of initiatives that offer complimentary healthcare and educational resources. These projects seek to improve accessibility and quality; yet, their implementation sometimes encounters delays.

The Responsibilities of the Nigerian State

A complex confluence of socio-economic, political, and historical factors may trace the origins of banditry in Nigeria, particularly in the North West region. There has been an increase in lawlessness in the North West region, which includes states such as Zamfara, Katsina, Kebbi, and Sokoto. Mass kidnappings, cattle rustling, and violent clashes between herdsmen and farmers have typified this increased lawlessness (Mustapha, 2021). A number of factors, such as the dissolution of traditional authority systems, the weakening of communal relationships, and the availability of weaponry, contribute to the increasing levels of insecurity. In addition, the socio-economic misery that is characterized by poverty and unemployment has considerably contributed to the expansion of criminal activities. This is because disillusioned young people are looking for other ways to survive (Katsina, 2021). To combat the banditry epidemic, the Nigerian government must fulfill a number of crucial responsibilities. We can classify them into four key categories: the supply of security, the growth of the socioeconomic system, the enforcement of laws and the administration of justice, and the engagement of the community. The primary responsibility of the Nigerian government is to provide the well-being and protection of its civilian population. In areas plagued by banditry, this requires not only a detectable military presence but also the implementation of preventative measures to address and mitigate the possibility of violence.

A reorganisation of the government's policy for internal security is required, which should include the enhancement of the capabilities of the armed forces and the police enforcement agencies. However, critics have frequently expressed their opinion that the Nigerian Army's response has been inadequate. However, despite the fact that military measures have resulted in both successes and failures, they have not significantly disrupted banditry networks or dissuaded new participants from entering the criminal environment (Ogunniyi, 2022). Banditry thrives in an environment characterized by poverty and underdevelopment. Therefore, the government of Nigeria must implement comprehensive socio-economic programs to alleviate poverty and provide alternative employment opportunities for young people dissatisfied with their current employment situation. The implementation of this strategy necessitates substantial investments in sectors like education, job creation, and infrastructure development. There are a number of studies that suggest that regions with improved access to educational and economic opportunities have lower rates of criminal activity (Kwaja, 2022). The reduction of banditry and the enhancement of community resilience are both outcomes that result from addressing core socio-economic concerns. In order to effectively combat banditry, a powerful criminal justice system is absolutely necessary.

The Nigerian government must promptly investigate and prosecute criminals to establish a pattern of behavior that discourages future criminal acts. One of the most significant

challenges is the existence of corruption within the legal system. Individuals involved in banditry often witness instances of leniency or corruption. According to Hassan (2021), in order for the Nigerian state to successfully recover the trust of the people, it is essential for the state to demonstrate a strong commitment to the enhancement of law enforcement, including the training and adequate equipping of personnel. It is vital to engage with the communities that are located nearby in order to understand the core reasons for banditry. The Nigerian government needs to foster collaboration with community leaders in order to develop individualized solutions that address certain problems that are prevalent in the country. In several instances, communities have become isolated and distrustful of the state, resulting in a deficiency in coordination with security officers. Through the process of re-establishing trust through conversation and collaboration, it is possible to enhance methods of intelligence gathering and to encourage local ownership of security projects. (Boko and Babafemi, 2023)

Challenges Facing the Nigerian State

The situation leads to banditry, which can have serious consequences for the government. In locations where banditry is prominent, law enforcement agencies frequently confront significant obstacles when it comes to keeping order in those regions. There are a number of elements that can make it challenging for law enforcement to effectively suppress banditry. Two of these characteristics are corruption and a scarce supply of resources. In some instances, law enforcement officers may even consider signing up with criminal organizations or accepting payments in order to become involved in banditry (Carlson, 2021). It is possible to link the inefficiency of law enforcement agencies back to the more fundamental problems of legitimacy and capability that exist within the state legislature. In circumstances in which citizens have the perception that their government is insufficient or lacking in strength, they may resort to other systems of governance, such as lending support to bandit groups.

From the perspective of Krueger & Malečková (2003), these organizations are regarded as a means of providing protection or support in instances where the state is unable to provide assistance. The end result is a precarious circumstance in which banditry not only thrives in the void that is left behind by governments that have failed but also occasionally flourishes under the premise of getting society back to its normal order. An intricate situation has arisen as a result of this particular set of circumstances. Bandits have experienced a transformation as a result of technical improvements, adopting new means of operation as a result of this transformation. Cyber-banditry is a phenomenon that occurs when criminals use technology to commit fraud, steal identities, and help carry out other illegal actions. This phenomenon, which arises when criminals use technology to commit these crimes, is a significant cause for concern. It poses a unique challenge for law enforcement as it typically obscures accountability and transcends regional boundaries. This makes it a particularly difficult problem to solve. Criminals are able to carry out their operations with a substantial degree of impunity due to the anonymity that the internet affords (Wall, 2007). This makes it more difficult to confront these criminals and bring them to justice.

Furthermore, the digital divide exacerbates the already existing inequities. This is due to the fact that people living in poor areas may not have access to the technology they require in order

to secure themselves or take advantage of opportunities beyond their immediate surroundings. This hinders people's economic advancement and fuels banditry. Encouraging people to resort to illegal methods of sustenance not only heightens the risk of them engaging in banditry. In Nigeria, corruption continues to be a significant obstacle, making it challenging to achieve both security and good governance. This condition makes it difficult to achieve both goals. There are a number of stories that give the impression that law enforcement and the military are not immune to corrupt activities, which makes it more difficult to properly combat banditry (Eze, 2021). In addition, individuals frequently have the opportunity to witness directly the inadequacy of their security forces, which not only exacerbates their dissatisfaction but also further separates them from the social fabric of their communities. Two factors directly hinder the Nigerian state's efforts: banditry and political instability, as well as instability within the political system. The political establishment is not sufficiently committed to addressing problems of this nature.

According to Oladipo (2022), there is a risk that the political elite could advantage on the disturbance for their own political gain. It may be impossible to implement a consistent and comprehensive governance and security policy. The Nigerian government is struggling to deploy a sufficient number of security soldiers, maintain law and order, and implement social initiatives due to a shortage of financial resources. The government faces difficulties in carrying out all of these activities, despite the fact that they are all essential for addressing the problem of banditry. Economic restraints substantially limit the government's ability to tackle problems such as resource allocation and mounting debt, thereby hindering effective action (Wada, 2021).

In an effort to suppress banditry, the government of Nigeria has employed a number of different measures. To strengthen the military, these methods include the establishment of military task teams, the deployment of community policing programs, and the building of alliances with other nations. These initiatives all aim to enhance the military's capabilities. Recently, the military has carried out offensives, most notably Operation Hadarin Daji, to recruit local vigilantes and hunters for anti-banditry operations. These actions have yielded varying degrees of success in this regard.

In his article from 2022, Nwankwo states that these hybrid techniques acknowledge the significance of community involvement in the process of preserving security. Despite its efforts, the organization often faces criticism for lacking comprehensive, consistent, and long-term planning. Despite the company's efforts, it continues to face criticism. The general public often perceives many military operations as reactive actions, rather than a proactive strategy that seeks to address the long-term issues that fuel bandit activities. This perception is a common one. The government must have a strong presence to ensure the success of community projects and determine their direction. This holds true even though fostering community watchfulness is a wonderful thing. Despite the fact that it is aware of the fundamental causes and consequences of banditry at the root level, the Nigerian government has had a difficult time developing efficient security methods. Despite its awareness of these factors, the Nigerian government has struggled to develop effective security measures.

Mackinlay (2023) says that military operations have frequently been carried out in an erroneous manner, with a focus placed on reactive rather than proactive tactics and a failure to contact local communities that could serve as a source of intelligence and support. Mackinlay's assertions highlight the often-inaccurate execution of military operations. Furthermore, attempts to combat insurgency have often failed to address the fundamental socioeconomic issues that motivate individuals to join bandits.

Another challenge is the socioeconomic marginalization of the North-West, which is a significant contributor to the phenomenon of banditry. More than half of the people living in Zamfara State are considered to be living in extreme poverty, and the majority of them do not have access to essential amenities or prospects for economic advancement (Nigeria Security Tracker, 2021). The Nigeria Security Tracker's study confirms these findings. As a result of feeling helpless and exposed, a large number of people, particularly young people, seek protection from bandit organisations. This presents a serious challenge for the Nigerian government, which recognizes the importance of addressing this issue. Moreover, historical neglect of the North West region has exacerbated banditry activities. It is not uncommon for the oil-rich Niger Delta region to be the benefactor of government policies that disregard the interests of other regions. According to the National Bureau of Statistics in 2021, the North West region has an unemployment rate that is approximately twice as high as the national average. This fact contributes to a feeling of isolation and hatred toward the state, which, in turn, makes the situation even more difficult to manage. The Nigerian state is currently struggling with a number of long-standing political issues, which makes the fight against banditry in the North West region even more difficult. A decrease in the effectiveness of both policing and security measures is a consequence of corruption within the police force. In Nigeria, which ranks 149th out of 180 countries in research conducted by Transparency International (Transparency International, 2022), the percentage of the population that has faith in the government's ability to guarantee safety is decreasing. There have been cases of police officials working together with criminals, whether through bribery or carelessness.

These examples are evidence of the extent to which the security establishment is not free from corruption. The disconnected nature of the Nigerian security services makes it challenging for the Nigerian government to provide a sufficient response to situations involving banditry. It is usual for the Nigerian Police Force, the military, and other local vigilante groups to fail to cooperate with one another, which leads to ineffectiveness in the fight against banditry. According to the findings of research conducted by the Centre for Democracy and Development (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2021), security personnel frequently do not know one another's whereabouts or methods, which significantly delays operations against banditry. This unconnected strategy has made it possible to dismantle bandit organisations on several occasions, allowing them a degree of impunity to continue their activities. Communities' dynamics significantly influence anti-banditry programs, determining their success or failure. The widespread violence plaguing many towns in the North West has resulted in a lack of trust between the general populace and law enforcement. Long-standing complaints against the government have prompted certain communities to form small militias for self-defense. When vigilante organizations, typically with good

intentions, spiral into vicious cycles of violence and retribution against those they perceive as their adversaries, the security situation could potentially worsen (Hassan, 2021). The fact that the community does not participate in the implementation of security measures makes the problem even more severe. The state-centered security measures have suppressed traditional leadership structures like village elders and chiefs. This strategy has diminished the role of community leaders, who traditionally have the ability to mediate conflicts and promote peace. For the purpose of effectively combating banditry, it is essential to restore confidence between communities and the security providers for those areas.

It is also essential to observe that the dynamics of the region play a significant role in the fight against banditry in the North West region of Nigeria. It is possible for firearms and bandit networks to readily move between Nigeria and neighboring countries such as Niger and Mali due to the porous borders that exist between the two countries. The fact that armed groups are so prevalent in the Sahel region makes an already dangerous situation considerably more precarious than it originally was. According to the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2021), in view of the expanding criminal networks in West Africa, Nigeria needs to look into the possibility of collaborating on cross-border security policies. Climate change is intensifying competition for water and land, which is worsening resource scarcity in the Northwest and putting farmers and herders at war. Due to the interrelated nature of environmental and security concerns, the Nigerian government is finding it increasingly difficult to confront the origins of banditry head-on. The interconnectedness of the challenges leads to this outcome. As a result, it is of the utmost importance to properly address these challenges by employing a multi-pronged strategy that encompasses initiatives for sustainable development and regional collaboration.

Way Forward (Potential Solutions)

For the Nigerian state to be able to effectively combat the banditry epidemic, it is essential that they improve their capabilities. It is imperative that the government of Nigeria enhance its community involvement strategies in order to make it possible for local populations to participate in debates regarding security. According to International Alert (2023), the establishment of communication forums has the potential to connect the state and communities, thereby enhancing both confidence and collaboration in security measures. It is imperative that we make socio-economic empowerment a top priority by organizing and implementing job development initiatives in the North West. This has the potential to meet the requirements of the youth generation and provide alternatives to traditional forms of violence. The government must take the lead in eliminating corruption from the armed forces and law enforcement agencies. Accountability mechanisms can restore public confidence in the law enforcement system. Implementing educational reform in bandit-afflicted regions can equip young people with the necessary skills for alternative jobs and decrease their likelihood of engaging in criminal activities. Secondly, we need to give socio-economic development initiatives the highest priority. It is imperative that governments and non-profit organizations work together to provide economic, educational, and sustainable life opportunities for young people. This will hopefully discourage young people from joining bandit groups. By developing the local community, the state can address some of the issues that cause banditry.

For the purpose of conducting security operations, the government of Nigeria ought to make investments in the establishment of a comprehensive intelligence-gathering apparatus. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to collaborate with local communities and foreign partners who are able to demonstrate technical expertise. Reforming the institutions that are responsible for security is ultimately necessary. This includes the training and retraining of security staff, ensuring their readiness to interact with communities efficiently. Both the cultivation of public trust and the restoration of confidence in the state's ability to fulfill its commitments are dependent upon the enhancement of accountability mechanisms within security forces.

Conclusive Remarks

Banditry is a complex issue that significantly impacts society, requiring careful consideration of various aspects. In addition to the direct acts of robbery and violence, its influence extends into the economic, psychological, and governmental institutions of the communities that it adversely affects. The effects on society and the economy bring to light the urgent need for effective solutions, while the historical context of banditry helps clarify how structural imbalances can exacerbate criminal behavior. Banditry is a historical form of criminal activity. The threat of banditry in North West Nigeria clearly demonstrates the state's failure to fulfill its security responsibilities. When we dissect the socio-historical factors that have contributed to this problem, we see that we are unable to comprehend banditry only via the use of violent activities. Instead, we need to contextualize it within a more comprehensive framework that takes into account governance, socio-economic difficulties, and the dynamics of the community. The majority of violence and instability have occurred in a specific region, and addressing these deep interrelationships is essential to create effective solutions and restore stability in this region. It is of the utmost importance that the Nigerian government places a high priority on comprehensive programs that not only focus on urgent security issues but also on long-term socio-economic development and community engagement. Furthermore, prioritizing these programs is crucial.

Banditry in the North West region of Nigeria is a multi-faceted phenomenon that requires deliberate action across numerous dimensions, including security, socio-economic development, law enforcement, and community participation. We must address the problem of banditry. In order to effectively handle this situation, the Nigerian state plays a diverse role. Despite the state's efforts to address these systemic issues, significant obstacles remain to overcome. To alter the current trajectory of insecurity, the government of Nigeria needs to enact comprehensive measures that not only address the symptoms of banditry but also the fundamental causes of the problem. Only then can we completely transform the situation. By cultivating community participation, investing in socio-economic initiatives, and increasing law enforcement operations against corruption, the Nigerian state is empowered to work towards assuring a safer future for the North West region and, ultimately, for the entire nation. Strengthening law enforcement operations can accomplish this. It is vital to consider the underlying reasons in order to effectively combat banditry. These reasons include the resolution of economic inequities, the strengthening of the capabilities of the state, and the creation of communal solidarity. If governments want to successfully deal with the problem,

they need to make the elimination of cyber threats a key priority. This is because banditry is continuing to expand in the digital world and is becoming increasingly problematic. The creation of comprehensive strategies that involve both prevention and reaction is still required in order to lessen the harmful consequences that banditry has on society.

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