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Abstract

Armed banditry, which involves raiding and counter raiding between communities, killings, and kidnapping for ransom, has become security nightmare for the inhabitants of states that lie within the North West region of Nigeria. Military Operations such as SarunDagi and Kaima (I-III) were launched by the Federal Government of Nigeria to tackle the insecurity, still the phenomenon has become more complex with daily occurrences in Zamfara-Kaduna Axis. This paper seeks to investigate the nature and dynamics of armed banditry in the region with a view to proffer symmetrical panacea to the crisis. Adopting descriptive research methodology where data were sourced from both primary and secondary sources and were analyzed qualitatively. Governance theory was used as theoretical framework to analyze the trends of armed banditry in the region. This theory hinges on the capability of government to promote governance. Finding reveals that the conflict is multifarious in nature – it is social, economical, political and military in nature. Therefore, it is recommended among others, that for peace to be guaranteed in the region, an overarching expansive strategy that will take into consideration the interwoven nature of the insecurity in the region must be adopted

Keywords: Armed Banditry, Insecurity, Peace, Multifaceted, Strategy

Introduction

North-West Region in Nigeria occupied the largest land mass among the regions of the country with over 20,131km² and most of its, ungovernable spaces which constituted thick forest in the region. It is the most populous region in Nigeria with over 32,212,791 populations according to Nigeria Census 2006. This naturally translates into high electoral value as alluded to in the 2015 and 2019 General elections in Nigeria. Despite this strategic and dominant position in the Nigeria Polity, the region has been bedeviled with series of internal security challenges ranging from Maitasini in the 1980's, Sango-Kataf crisis, Farmers-Herders Conflict, Boko Haram and

more devastating- the current armed banditry insecurity which has continued to threaten the corporate existence of the region. Specifically, this region comprises of Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Jigawa, Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara States. Amongst these, Zamfara, Kaduna, Sokoto, and Katsina bordered Niger Republic while Kebbi bordered Benin Republic.

Historically, Armed Banditry as a form of insecurity is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria, although the dimension it assumed in the current dispensation is not only sophisticated but seem to have dwarfed all security apparatus put in place by the Nigerian Government. This violence increasingly involves brutal and reckless murder, acts of 'ethnic cleansing', criminal marketing gangs, highway bandit, as well as animal theft, commonly labeled as 'cattle rustling'. In the pre-colonial era of the country, 'BakinJaki' was a notorious Armed Bandit in the old Borgu emirate of Northern Nigeria. The weapons of attack were horses, spears, bows and poison arrows. The bandits attacked their victims, robbed and sometimes sold them as slaves.

In post-colonial Nigeria, especially in the 1970's and 1980's, there were splinters records of armed bandits along major highways in the country such as Lagos-Ibadan, Maiduguri-Yola, Benin-Ore, Kano-Kaduna-Abuja and of course other major high ways in the country. But in those years, there were not emphatically labelled armed bandits but armed robbers whose sole aim was to rob passengers and other road users of their belongings. Hardly was there any major attack where incessant raiding, kidnapping and killings of inhabitants of either remote villages or urban areas were recorded.

However, in recent times, most especially from 2010, armed banditry has become a menace and a great nightmare to the communities not only in the North West Nigeria but also to other parts of the country such as Adamawa, Taraba and Yobe. But the armed bandits' insecurity is more daring and more threatening in North West Nigeria than any part of the country with daily occurrences and has become uncontrollable which led to outburst from Governors of North West States, notably that of Zamfara State. In one of his remarks, Governor Abdulaziz Yari notes that his state was under siege by bandits. In response to this security menace, the Federal Government of Nigeria established various military operations to tackle the menace which includes Operation SharanDaji in July 2015, Operation Harbin Kunama I in 2015, Operation Harbin Kunama II and Operation Dokaji in 2017. Ironically, these military operations recorded mixed success with arrest of some members of these armed bandit gangs. A yawning gap that seem to render the modicum of success in these military operations inconsequential is the lack of symmetrical relationship between the mechanisms deployed to tackle the insecurity and the nature of the insecurity.

Prior to this period, it was the ravaging Boko Haram terrorist in the country most especially in the North Eastern part of the country. However, Armed Banditry-Kidnapping, Cattle rustling and incessant attacks on communities in the North West region of the country has become a nightmare not only to the host communities but also to the security architecture of the Nigerian Government. Since 2016, banditry has become a daily occurrence in the region, and it is at alarming rate which has defied all established mechanisms to manage the trend. At the sub-national level, Government of the affected states in the region- Katsina, Kebbi, Kaduna, Kano and Zamfara have adopted both subtle and harsh mechanisms to manage the conflict. In particular, Zamfara State Government has initiated dialogue with the bandits but not much have been achieved as criminality in the region has defied solution.

This paper therefore seeks to underscore the main causes of this trend, situate the failure and successes recorded in the management of the conflict and proffer global best practices on the prevention and management of the conflict by recommending multifaceted strategy. The paper is divided into five segments- section one dwells with the introduction, section two deals the theoretical framework, section three conceptualizes basic concepts in the discussion, and section four is centered on the result and discussion while section five is the concluding and recommending section.

Research methodology

The research study is historical in nature; therefore, the paper adopts descriptive design research method. Data were sourced from both primary and secondary sources where interviews were conducted for twenty (20) purposively selected displaced people from Zamfara, Kaduna, Kebbi, and Katsina States. Materials such as journals, Internet, information, Newspapers and textbooks were relied upon for secondary sources. Both the primary and secondary data were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis.

Conceptual Clarification

Banditry

Banditry is an international phenomenon and is a global activity such as terrorism. It has occurred in Russia, China, Brazil and predominant in the Horn of Africa. This phenomenon is always an aggressive reaction of a group of individuals against social, economic and political injustice perpetuated by another group of individuals, committees and government. Banditry is not armed robbery where a group of armed individuals attack innocent citizens with the sole aim of robbing their belongings. Creveld cited in Mburu (1999:90) posit:

Banditry can attain a level of violence that is not easily stoppable by governments as regular armies visibly lose the initiative and monopoly of policing the society. Furthermore, by its nature, banditry presents laissez-faire of a kind where individuals and communities' relationships are increasingly built on domination and coercion.

Banditry is mostly carried out by raiding, counter raiding, kidnapping for ransom, stealing and setting ablaze the attacked communities. Banditry is carried out sometimes to settle political and economic grievances. It is a loose terrorist's activity that predominates in an ungovernable space such as forest and border areas. The motive for traditional banditry was protest and redress, the opportunity was the existence of a bureaucracy that was too rudimentary to control the peripheral of the socio-economic unit such as pre-nineteenth century Abyssinian (Amharic) Empire. In the same vein, Crummey (1986:151) position when he asserts that banditry was a protest against centralism of authority and vocation where individuals wage wars against greedy village chiefs or the political unit on behalf of the local community while living in the forest as hermits until justice was executed. Okoli and Francis (2014) asserts:

Banditry means occurrence or prevalence of armed robbery or violent crime. It involves the use of force, or threat to the effect, to intimidate a person with the intent to rob rape or kill. Banditry is a crime against persons. It has been a common genre of crime, as well as cause violence in contemporary societies

Banditry is of many dimensions- social banditry, political banditry and economic banditry. The earliest of banditry was social banditry and prevalent in the 19th century which was primarily directed towards redress of injustice against certain community. The brigandage and bandits were celebrated and immortalized because they were fighting for community cause. However, banditry has moved beyond this line and it is both economic and political in nature where sophisticated weapons and welltrained individuals now involved.

In North-West Region of Nigeria, banditry has surmounted all military operations launched against the activities and it has become an untamable monster that threatened the corporate existence of the region, has the inhabitants of the region now live in perpetual fear of daily attack by the bandits.

Insecurity

Insecurity is the absence of security in the life of human being. Buzan (1991) sees security as political, economic, social and environmental threat that affects the individual as well as the state at national and international levels. Nigeria now live in era when insecurity has become complex and regular nightmare that is not endemic but also pandemic. Before now, it was Niger Delta militancy insecurity in the south-south that threatened the economic nerve of the country. In the recent time, the Boko Haram terrorism has reduced the North East to theatre of war. However, banditry insecurity has defied all capacity of the country's internet security agencies to tame the monster thus the combined military apparatus has been put on defensive line. On the other hand, Best cited Akpotor and Oromoreghe (2012) asserts: Insecurity is a state of vulnerability, danger, threat of an attack individually and collectively internally and externally to the extent that day-to-day living of people not guaranteed. Virtually both the citizens including the traditional rulers and the government are living in perpetual dangers and fears in this region of the country. The citizens have been deprived of their right of mobility and thus this has contributed to the economic misfortune of the region. The unabated and sporadic killings and destruction of properties the North West region are all expression of insecurity in the region.

Creating secure lines in a complex, turbulent world entails hard work. Security-building activities are confronted with risks, some of them transnational; with insecurities associated with war, environmental problems, crime etc.; and also with individualization and ideological tendencies favouring individual freedom at the expense of sacrificing security (Bauman cited in Iwu, 2014). Security is central to the survival and actualization of state policies and development and these are largely determined by the level of prevailing security stratagem both internally and externally (Nwolize cited in Iwu (2014).

Multifaceted Strategy of Conflict Management

It is important to understand clearly the conflict cycle to apply appropriate mechanisms to tackle the conflict. Conflict cycle is like union which is layers bound therefore required layers or multifaceted approaches. According to Swanström and Weissmann (2005), the conflict structure consists of three parts: attitudes, behaviour and situations that interact and create conflicts between actors. Mitchell's conflict structure simplifies the complex reality in an understandable way. A conflict is not a static situation, but a dynamic one – the intensity level changes over a conflict's life cycle. An understanding of the conflict cycle is essential for an understanding of how, where and when to apply different strategies and measures of conflict prevention and manage. Conflict everywhere in the World is always complex and interwoven

in nature. It may start from the struggle of control economic or political resources but later get to cultural or social struggle between and among actors in a set up. In another words, conflict also consists of different phases such as stable peace, unstable peace and war phases. It is germane to note here that military approach may not suffice during stable peace where negotiation and political - economic approach may be appropriate. In the same vein, military approach may not necessary end an escalation where provision of economic resources such as employment opportunities and poverty alleviation are more appropriate. Swanström and Weissmann

(2005) contends further:

If structural preventive measures are implemented at an early stage, including both the building of institutions and development of trust and (longer-term) cooperation, they decrease the perceived need to, and hence risk of, escalating a potential conflict issue into the level of unstable peace. The more pronounced a conflict becomes the more specific measures it requires. At the same time, structural measures are losing importance as a probable strategy

In crisis situations like the North West Nigeria, management of the conflict needs to be well planned in order to deal with the complex nature of the conflict and military action may not suffice alone. Power and social inequalities must be addressed before community based empowerment and thus lasting peace can be achieved. We end direct violence by changing conflict behaviors, structural violence by removing structural injustice and cultural violence by changing attitudes (Onodara, & Jokivirta 2015).

Theoretical framework

Though different theories have been advanced and applied to analyze insecurity in Nigeria, Onu (2013:93), approached it from the Frustration-Aggression Dimension; while others toed Armed Robbery, Wobble Economy and Opposition-ruling party theories; Shalangwa (2013) adopted strained theory to analyze banditry in the North West of Nigeria. All these theories underscored insecurity in their own ways but Governance theory will be more suffice to the current trend in the North West region of Nigeria.

Governance theory is adopted to analyze and underpin the nature and dynamics of Armed Banditry insecurity in the North West region of Nigeria. This theory posits that government shouldered abundant responsibilities of the state and a slip in these responsibilities will result into serious catastrophe in the state. Similarly, Jreisat, (2004:06) observes that excessive political influence and bureaucratic control over state, and local government by the central authority have been blamed for conditions of massive poverty, corruption, economic stagnation, political instability, confused priorities, chaos, and violation of human rights of citizens and non-citizens alike. In the same vein, Werlin (2003:54) notes that it is evident that wealth or poverty of any nation goes hand in hand with the state of governance and not merely with, e.g., natural resources.

The theory of Governance sees the role of the state from multi-organizational perspectives or action. It posits that governance is an all-encompassing action that involves politics, economics, social, cultural and security aspects. This theory is built on a broad range of theoretical sources that includes system theory, post-structuralism, institutional economics, actor

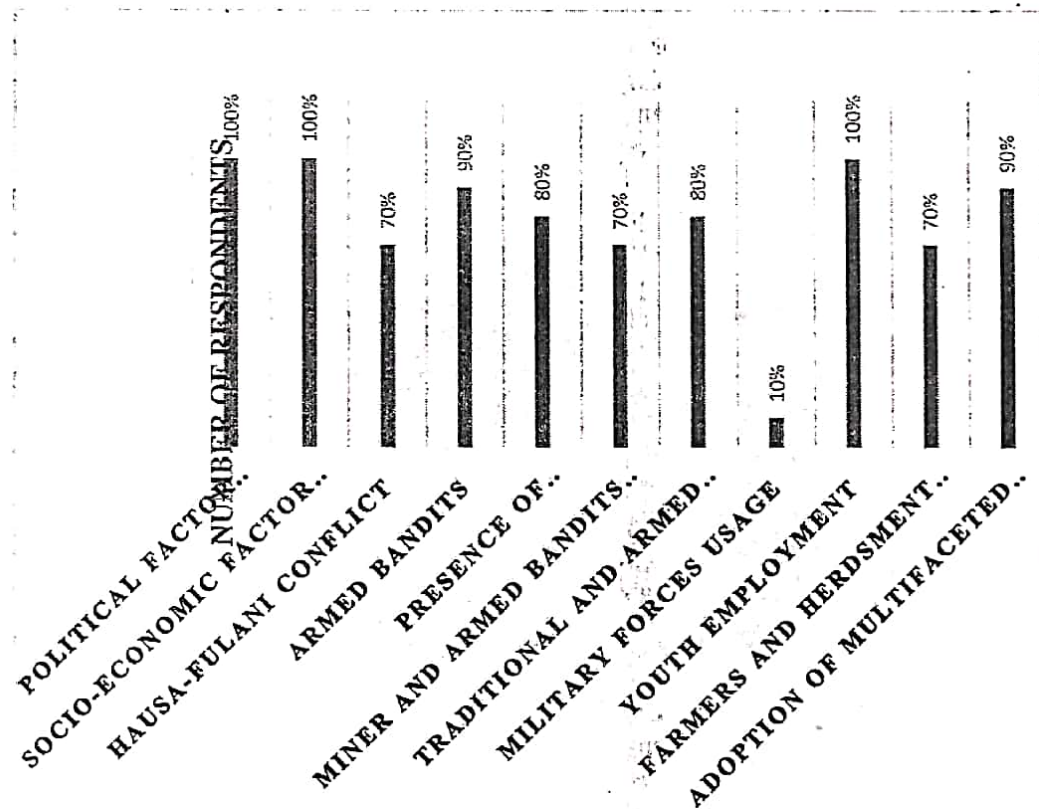
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network theory and development theories. It includes non-governmental institutions and informal, non-governmental mechanisms and how they move ahead, satisfy their needs and fulfill their wants. Therefore, crisis in governance can result into political, social, economic and military insecurity. In this case of North West region in Nigeria, the armed banditry insecurity is because of lack of government capacity to provide both socio-economic and political protections for their governed territories. The porous borders, poverty, ungoverned spaces such as forest that served as hidden and logistics abodes and military incapability to address the situation were all evident of governance crisis. In the North West part of Nigeria, it is a case of governance without government in most of the territories of the region. Government at all levels have failed to provide both human and economic security to the citizens thus frequent banditry attack in the zone. Poverty, unemployment, lack of access to modern education and disconnect in the protection of physical security were the geneses of the insecurity in the North –West region.

Result and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics of the causes of armed banditry in North West Region of Nigeria

Table 1: Showing the responses of respondents regarding armed banditry in the North West Region of Nigeria



In Table 1, respondents believe that there is a 100% involvement of political forces and socio-economic factors like poverty in the occurrence of armed banditry in the region. 70% of the respondents however, agree that there is a link between Hausa-Fulani Conflict and Armed Banditry, mining activities and armed banditry in the North West Region of Nigeria. Respondents also believe that presence of ungovernable spaces (80%) and linkage between traditional rulers and armed banditry (80%) are among the major causes of armed banditry in the region. 10% of the respondents agree that it is impossible to tame the armed banditry by adopting only the military forces as the countering forces. But, provision of youth employment (100%) is believed to be a major cure for the banditry. In addition, 70% and 90% of the respondents also believed that establishing a peaceful coexistence between farmers and herdsmen and adopting multi-faceted strategies in combating the insecurity are some of the ways by which the armed banditry can be managed.

CAUSES OF ARMED BANDITRY IN NORTH WEST REGION OF NIGERIA

- Political factor involvement
- Hausa Fulani Conflict
- Miner Activities
- Socio-economic factor involvement
- Ungovernable spaces
- Traditional Rulers Involvement

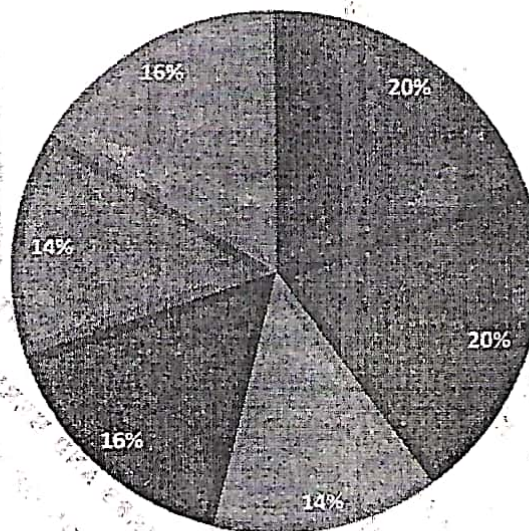


Figure 1 showing the causes of Armed Banditry in the North West Region of Nigeria

Figure 1 depicts the causes of armed banditry in the region. The result revealed that Political factor involvement (20%), Socio-economic factors involvement (20%), Presence of governable spaces (16%), involvement of traditional rulers (16%), miner activities (14%) and Hausa Fulani Conflict (14%) are the major causes of the banditry in the region. This implies that there is the

presence of political forces that keep steering up the insecurity. Socio-economic factors such as poverty also encourage the occurrence of armed banditry in the region. Also, presence of larger ungovernable spaces in the region likely serves as hide-out for the armed bandits, giving them room to strategize their operations. The mining activities in one of the states in the region; Zamfara State, also contribute to the occurrence of armed banditry in the region. This could be due to fight over dominance in the mining activity. Lastly, Hausa-Fulani Conflict contributes to the occurrence of armed banditry in the region.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Peace and security issues are not only of concern to Nigeria but to the entire global world hence the cardinal objective of establishing world umbrella world – United Nations Organization in 1945 was the maintenance of world peace and order. However, both Federal and State Government of North West region of Nigeria acted lukewarmly in the earliest period of armed banditry insecurity in the region which resulted into clipping of security architectures put in place to address the ugly situation. Though, the insecurity situation in the region was one of the most underreported in the world (Usman, 2019), the situation has claimed thousand off lives, destroyed properties worth billions of naira and displaced thousands of peoples. In its late responses, federal Government launches series of military operations ranging from operation Harbin Kunama II and Operation Dokaji in 2017 albeit, does not stem the spate of insecurity in the region but rather resulted into open confrontation between the military and civilians who supposed to collaborate in confronting the menace. Inferred from the field situation on the insecurity in the region, Government has failed to employ required security apparatus to manage the crisis.

Tackling the armed bandit insecurity must be holistic in nature and multifaceted strategies required to tame the monster called banditry in the North-West region. The porous nature of Nigeria borders with her neighbor such as Niger and Benin Republic made the adjacent communities also susceptible to armed bandits attack. In Zamfara State, where armed banditry insecurity is most prominent, communities such as Anka, Maro, Kaura-Namoda and Talate, Marafa were all border lines with Niger and Benin.

Lack of employment and coupled with cattle rustling activities in those areas 'forced' the locals to 'switch and catapulted' to become armed bandits. The poverty levels and absence of proactive economic activities in these borders such as Ilesa in Sokoto attested to this. There is a great and urgent need to revitalize economically those border communities in Nigeria to prevent youths from being easily motivated to engage in armed banditry activities. More importantly, the ungoverned spaces which made up the thick forest and hidden and strategic places to the armed bandits needs to be governed by Nigeria Government vast areas- the North West region made of forest were left ungoverned due to the lack of both political and economic resources on the part of Government. IN a nutshell, a broader policy framework however, needs to be developed with an expansive and multifaceted security architecture designed to address the complex network of issues involved in the insecurity in the North West Nigeria.

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