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**YOUTH BANDITRY IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: AN EAGLE EYE ON THE SECURITY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS.**

By

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**Abstract**

Banditry is one of the common crimes perpetuated almost on a daily basis in northern Nigeria with attendant consequences on the security and socio-economic spheres of the people of the region. However, in spite of the traction the subject has gained in recent times, no adequate attention has been devoted to the involvement of youth in the nefarious act. This study therefore is aimed at filling this seeming knowledge gap. The study utilizes secondary data sourced from textbooks, articles, journals and the internet. While content analysis was used in analyzing the data, the theory of Frustration Aggression is adopted to explain why some youths have decided to take to banditry. The findings reveal that youths are the major perpetrators of banditry in northern Nigeria, and that their activities have grave security and socio-economic impacts on the entire region. This is seen in the sustained loss of lives and property as a result of killing, stealing and looting by bandits; loss of farmlands and cattle among others. In view of these, the paper recommends thus: Leaders in northern Nigeria should fulfill their obligations to their youth as contained in the 2009 National Youth Policy document to make them better citizens and prevent them from taking to crime. In doing this, their education, welfare, skill development etc. should be of utmost priorities; All borders within and between Nigeria and her immediate neighbours in the North should be properly policed to check the influx of bandits into the country; The National Assembly should come up with amendment to section 214 (1) of the 1999 constitution to allow for the creation of state police so that northern states can recruit, train, equip, fund and deploy their own police personnel to strategic locations in the north to combat the menace of youth banditry, etc.

**Keywords:** Banditry, Youth, Northern Nigeria, Security, State Police.

**Introduction**

Northern Nigeria is steadily sliding into a flashpoint of crime and criminality in form of banditry orchestrated by some disgruntled youths that are supposed to be the needed peace and development agents for the region in particular and Nigeria in general. This development, though not totally novel as different regions and states in the country like Delta, Enugu, Ondo, Oyo and Ebonyi states have witnessed one form of banditry or the other (CDD, 2015:7), the frequency of occurrence and the quantum number of casualties that usually accompany the ugly practice in the northern region has become a major concern to the government, the people of the region and the general public. Available evidence has shown that banditry has been in the increase and its casualty rates have dwarfed that of the Boko Haram operating in the northeast in recent times. Thus, from the total recorded deaths of 52 in 2017, 288 in 2018, 262 in the beginning of 2019 (BBC Reality Check, 14, April, 2019), the figure more than tripled by the end of 2019 with 1,400 lives lost to the act (Ringim, 2020). There are also reports that the activities of bandits have “crippled the local economies of the northwest with food production, pastoralism and animal husbandry dropping by about fifty percent” (Suleiman, 2019). Recently, the people of Kerawa, Zareyawa and Minda villages in Kaduna state came under multiple attacks by supposed armed bandits who accused the villagers of assisting the security agents with information about their hideouts. The attacks as reported, led to the deaths of at least 50 people as well as the looting of several properties (Aljezeera, March 2, 2020). This trend has also been witnessed in northern Nigerian states like Zamfara, Kebbi, Benue, Jos (Okoli, 2019) just to mention a few. And “youths are directly involved as perpetrators, using armed robbery, cattle rustling, and other forms of criminality to make a living” (Chris and Abdul, 2015:321).

Efforts to tackle the menace saw the deployment of different military operations to the region by the federal government. These include the Operation Harbin Kunama, Operation Diran Mikiya and Operation Puff Adder (Suleiman, 2019; Rufa'i, 2018:67). It also temporarily suspended all mining activities in Zamfara state between January and April, 2019 (BBC Reality Check, 14, April, 2019). Equally the government of Zamfara state is reported to have spent a total sum of 17 billion naira in military and security operations against this very enemy of the state (Suleiman, 2019). All these are in addition to the use of vigilante groups (Rufa'i, 2018). In spite of these laudable moves and other peace deals by the government of the affected region to assuage the perpetrators of the heinous crimes, the practice has continued unabated with plaintive voices calling for a better strategy that will bring about permanent solution to their plights.

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The paper therefore investigates youth banditry and its impacts on the security and other socio-economic aspects of the people of northern Nigeria. This is rewarding bearing in mind that previous studies conducted by some scholars have dwelled largely on other forms of banditry without giving adequate attention to the youth, who by available evidence (Momale, 2015; Rufa'i, 2018), are the major perpetrators of banditry in northern Nigeria. Thus, by focusing on youth banditry in the northern region of Nigeria, The paper contributes meaningfully to broaden the understanding and the scope of scholarship in this area. The paper is structured as follows: introduction, conceptual clarifications, theoretical framework, brief history of banditry, factors that influence youth banditry in northern Nigeria, their *Modus operandi* and, impacts on northern region of Nigeria, conclusion and recommendations

### Conceptual Clarifications

#### Banditry

The term banditry has been conceptualized by different researchers. Accordingly, Abdullahi (2019:645) referred to the concept "as a derivative of the term bandit, meaning an unlawful armed group terrorizing people and confiscating their properties", and that "it is synonymous with the establishment of gang groups who used Small and Light Weapons to carry out attacks against people. "In this regard", he added, "banditry could mean a set up criminal activities deliberately designed and carried out for personal gains". Similarly, Okoli and Okpaleke, cited by Okoli and Ugwu (2019:203) defined banditry as "the incidence of armed robbery or allied violent crimes, such as kidnapping, cattle rustling, and village or market raids. It also involves the use of force or threat, to that effect, to intimidate a person or a group of persons in order to rob, rape or kill". Furthermore, Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016:67) who argued that the concept of banditry has witnessed some changes according to time, space and circumstance, agreed with the above submission as they defined bandits within the context of African tradition. According to them bandits are people that "specialized in robbery and other crimes. And their activities are characterized by maiming, killing and wanton destruction of properties."

Different types of banditry exist. These include social banditry, armed banditry, rural banditry, etc. An armed banditry, according to Shalangwa (2013: vi), "involves attacking people on the highways and even the raiding of villages. These acts of banditry result in injury, loss of human lives, loss of property and a sustained fear of victimization among the border community". Social banditry which is more of a 19<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon represents a symbol of struggle against injustices in society and an apolitical expression of opposition to the dominant authority (Gustafson, 2017:48). Rural banditry, on the other hand referred to an "armed violence driven principally by the criminal intent to steal and plunder". It is motivated by the quest for economic accumulation. The victims are individuals and communities with valuables" (Okoli, 2019). Further definition has been offered by Abdullahi (2019: 645), thus:

Where the term banditry is connected to rural, it implies a group of rural outlawed involved in illicit activities such as raiding of villages, kidnappings and cattle rustling for primitive accumulation of wealth. Thus rural bandits are gang groups terrorizing local people or travelers of their valuable items or properties such as merchandise, money, cattle, camel, sheep etc.

Notwithstanding the types, banditry in northern Nigeria exhibits common characteristics such as forceful dispossession of the victims' money and other valuables, killing, possession of weapons, the use of communication equipment, etc. They are motivated by the desire to accumulate wealth or other economic gains. And their *modus operandi* includes armed robbery, kidnapping, cattle rustling and village raids (see Okoli, 2019; Abdullahi, 2019)

#### Youth

The term "youth" is generally used when referring to young people. The United Nations usually used the age range of 15-24 when talking about the youth (Olufunke and Folunke, 2014:154). But it is believed that such "distinction is too much narrow for countries like Nigeria." Consequently, the Second National Youth Policy Document of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (SNYPDFRN, 2009:6) defined youth to comprise "all young males and females aged 18-35 years who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria." This definition takes into cognizant "the conditions and realities on ground especially historical, and social and full

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justice, equity, fairness and gender equality; Assist young people in reaching their goals and full potential; Recognize their capabilities and individualities, according to age, maturity, and allow whenever possible their choice of educational fields and careers with recourse to guidance and counselling; Be sensitive to the needs and difficulties of young women and men; Respect and accept the contribution of young men and women to society through the use of their talents, resources, ideas; Provide adequate funding for educational and create equal opportunities to be educated; Create opportunities for the youth involvement in decision making that affects them, the environment and society. Provide adequate funding for sustainable development of youth oriented projects (SNYPDFRN, 2009:13-14). Unfortunately all these obligations to the young men and women are lacking in the region covered by this study.

### **Youth Banditry**

Youth banditry simply refers to the involvement of young adults aged between 18 and 35 years in crime and criminality. It could be in form of rural banditry, armed banditry or social banditry but the major perpetrators are the youths. According to the United Nations estimation about 25 million youth population of Nigeria that are “economically, socially and politically deprived are among the major perpetrators of armed criminality and gangsters” (Centre for International Cooperation and Security cited in Shalangwa, 2013:36). Furthermore, it has been revealed that the swiftness involved in rustling could best be handled by the youth. “Since most of the theft was executed with the aid of motor-bikes, the animals grazing on the outskirts of the villages had thus, been rendered easy to cart away with by the young criminals” (Ibrahim cited in Rufa'i, 2018a:68). It has also been confirmed that the foot soldiers that carrying out banditry like cattle rustling are “youths of pastoral extraction who are controlled by sophisticated and well connected cattle rustling merchants, who organized the rustling, transportation and marketing of the stolen cattle” (Momale, 2015:88). This therefore necessitates our choice of this topic in order to deepening our understanding of the subject matter.

### **Northern Nigeria**

The area known as northern Nigeria today comprises 19 states divided into three geo-political zones of North-East, North-West and North- Central. The North-East consists of Adamawa, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe and Bauchi states. The North-West is made of Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Zamfara, Kebbi, Jigawa and Sokoto states, while North-Central includes the states of Benue, Plateau, Kogi, Niger, Nasawara, Kwara and the FCT (Hoffmann, 2014:2). The Northern region is larger both in size and population than the South with a total of forty-six thousand square Kilometers representing three quarters of Nigeria (Crampton cited by Dauda (2014:22). The region is an area rich in natural solid minerals and agricultural potentials (Hoffmann, 2014:1). It is also lucky to have produced most of the leaders that have piloted the affairs of Nigeria since independence. However, all these have not translated into a better standard of living for its citizens as poverty remains widespread with the north-East having the highest prevalence rate of 72.2%, follows by North-West 71.1% and North-Central 71.1% respectively (Soludo cited by Dauda, (2014:26). According to Nwabufo (Feb. 7, 2020), Northern Nigeria has a high number of out of school children with 1 million of them each in Kano and Katsina as well as 800,000 in Jigawa state. The amount of drugs consumed daily in the region has also been quite high as three million bottles of codeine reported to have been consumed daily in Kano and Jigawa states by drug users in 2015 alone. All these combine to make the region the new hub for banditry and kidnapping (Ringim, 2020; Nwabufo, Feb. 7, 2020).

Whereas the northern region generally is said to have experienced several attacks by bandits, the seven states of the northwest geopolitical zone have had more while Katsina, Zamfara, Kaduna, Kebbi and Sokoto are the most hit. Also Katsina, Zamfara and Kaduna are often seen as “hotspots” just like Niger, plateau, Benue, Nasarawa states of the North central geopolitical zone (Okoli and Ugwu, 2019:202).

### **Security**

The concept of security has attracted several definitions owing to the fact that security determines the level of development and progress of a country as no meaningful progress can be achieved in an atmosphere characterized by chaos (Adie and Nwokedi, 2018:82). While many people often “equate security with gun that is to say the amount of guns (or weapons) a country has in its possession defines its level of security. This is not always true as security issues extend far beyond the use of gun to include food, health among others” (Adeniji and Adie, 2017:164). According to Akpuru-Aja, (2009) security in a normative sense means “orderly existence of things”. It also refers “to freedom from risk or danger or fear; safety; confidence and the ability of a nation to protect and defend itself; promote its cherished values and legitimate interest and enhance the well-being of its people (Amujiri and Agu, 2012: 285). Every country big or small is interested in the welfare and security of its citizens. They want a peaceful environment where people can pursue their individual goals and aspirations without molestation from anywhere. A state also wants security for its own existence. This explains why security is very paramount

and thus ranks among the first-tier of every country's national interest in the world (Adeniji and Adie, 2017). In spite of this relevance, the northern region has suffered colossally several security setbacks due to sustained activities of youth banditry across the region.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study aligns itself with Frustration Aggression theory to explain youth involvement in banditry in northern Nigeria. Frustration Aggression (F-A) theory emerged as a result of the publication by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower, and Sears (1939) where they hypothesized "that the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression". Put differently, aggression is always a consequence of frustration (Dennen, 2005: 12). This theory has influenced many scholars since its publication to the extent that those outside the field of psychology, where it originated, are equally using it to analysis social phenomenon in their domains (Adeniji and Adie, 2017:166).

The choice of this framework to explain the involvement of youths in banditry in our study area is not in any way to justify the bad practices but to draw the attention of the public to the neglect or marginalization suffered by the youth population in northern Nigeria which prompted them to take to crime either as a direct revenge for their plights or as a means of earning a living since the government has failed to cater for their daily needs. According to SNYPDFRN (2009: 6) young people require social, economic and political support to realize their full potential. However, where such supports are denied, the frustration that accompanies especially in area like employment among groups of young people can lead to violence.

### **Brief History of Banditry in Northern Nigeria**

Generally speaking, crime and criminality are parts and parcels of the human society as no human society is devoid of crime. So also is banditry which has been with man from time immemorial. For instance, studies by some scholars point to the fact that banditry, especially social banditry existed in Europe, America and Africa (Rufa'i, 2018 and Mburu, 1999) and that it emerged "out of the lower echelons of the social framework as a symbol of frustration with the status quo" (Gustafson, 2017:48). In the horn of Africa, social banditry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was to protect against centralism of authority, and many people took it as a vocation to wage war against village chiefs or political units on behalf of their local community while they stayed in forest and hermits until justice was done (Crummy cited in Mburu, 1999:90). Similarly, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe and America, bandits were freedom fighters whose intent was the emancipation of downtrodden or the colonized from the upper class or colonizers. Consequently, some prominent bandits like Chucho el Roto, Herachio Barnel and Santanon were often celebrated as heroes for their roles in Mexico independence (Rufa'i, 2018:67).

In northern Nigeria, banditry is said to have existed even before the colonization of the region by the British. Recounting this, a source narrates thus:

In those days, wayfarers and merchants travelling along our local economic roads usually faced the threats and dangers of ambush from nondescript bandits. Armed bandits and criminals were known to be targeting goods ferried on the back of donkeys, camel and ox Carts. Those bandits on our trade route would forcefully take those goods and disappeared into the bush..., the bandits would sometimes raid farming communities and villages with the intent of willful killing and wanton destruction of property....this subculture has been in existence even before the coming of colonialists to the territories of northern Nigeria (Jaafar, Page 12 2018).

Today, some have traced banditry in a place like Zamfara to the clash between farmers and herders over grazing lands which later "morphed into an intractable crisis posing a major threat to national and regional security" following its peak between 2014 and 2019 (Suleiman, Page 30, 2019). Similarly, the mismanagement of natural resources in exploitation, especially gemstone in the 1980s paved way for the emergence of banditry in the state (Odinkalu, Page 19 2018). In all these, the youths have remained the major players in the act of banditry in northern region of Nigeria.

### **Major Factors Influencing Youth Banditry in Northern Nigeria**

A lot of factors have influenced youth banditry in northern Nigeria. Prominent among them is the issue of conspiracy by the elite and their failure to empower the youth. Stressing on this, Nwabufo (Feb.7, 2020) writes: "Now that banditry and kidnapping, brought on by the purposive disempowerment of the young population of the north by the elite, is threatening the peace and security of every Nigerian, I suggest



northern leaders run the gauntlet. They cannot wish this away....Now is the time they tell themselves the truth; they created this Frankenstein.” Furthermore, the discovery of mineral resources such as gold has contributed in fueling the activities of youth banditry in the region as “gold mines and the activities of illegal miners competing for the control of gold reserves have served to further intensify the existence and activities of armed groups” in the region (ACAPA, 2020). Similarly, some people have link the prevalence of banditry attacks in the north to the activities of politicians who recruit, train and equip them to carry out their private agenda. Supporting this claim, Ringim (Page 25, 2020) avers:

We can never deny the fact that most of these security challenges are politically motivated either directly or indirectly. We have bandits today partly because some politicians would contract, illegally sponsor and equip criminal minded people. For the purpose of causing mayhem in cases where some political interests of theirs are not protected, these criminals will be left on their own with destructive arms at their disposal. What does one expect they will do with those arms?

The answer is banditry, of course. But Ringim is not alone on this claim as even the Nigerian Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Buratai expresses similar view but with emphasis on those politicians that lost the recent elections: “I Want to believe and rightly so that with the fall out of the just concluded elections, there are politicians who saw their defeat as a means of avenge, sponsoring these criminal activities and even banditry, clashes between herder and farmers” (Suleiman, 2019).

Besides, traditional rulers, for the purpose of “primitive accumulation of power and wealth”, have provided safety for bandit groups in the north to conduct their illicit activities (Abdullahi, 2019:645). Also unemployment has been fingered as contributing factor to youth involvement in banditry because of the money they get from it. Therefore, the youths have make cattle rustling, for instance, a big employment of labour for themselves (Chris and Abdul, 2015:333). Impoverishment/marginalization of the youth population has been considered as another critical factor influencing banditry activities in this same region (Shalangwa, 2013:26). There are also factors which fall under enabling environment for youth banditry. One of which is the porous and unmanned borders among the northern states as well as between Nigeria and her immediate neighboring countries. For instance, Shalangwa (2013:vi) has admitted that the influx of ex-combatants from Nigeria’s neighbouring war-torn countries of Chad, Niger and Cameroon has influenced banditry in the north. So if our borders are properly policed such influx could be checked. The presence of vast forest and desert areas which serve as safe haven for bandits are also among the enabling environment fueling youth banditry especially in places like Zamfara where rustling of cows has become a daily routine. Other factors include poverty, high level of illiteracy, poor policing policy, availability of small and light weapons, drug abuse, etc.

### **Modus Operandi**

The modes and patterns of operation of bandits in northern Nigeria have been studied in the past few years. Accordingly, these patterns are broadly classified into four as follows: kidnapping, village raids, highway robbery and cattle rustling (Okoli and Ugwu, 2019; Suleiman, 2019). Besides, youth bandits operate “in groups of between 10 and 25 persons and their choice language of communication is Hausa and Fulfulde (Shalangwa, 2013:vi). They also use motor-cycles in their operations. Let’s now look at their *modus Operandi*.

**Kidnapping:** Kidnapping is the forceful abduction of person or group of persons either for ransom or to achieve political or ritual goals. Available evidence indicates that kidnapping first started in 2006 with 63 reported cases and geometrically rose to 475 in 2011 and 1228 in 2013. And by 2014, Nigeria became the country with the highest cases of kidnapping followed by Mexico and Pakistan (Momah, 2015:203). In northern Nigeria, bandits have used kidnapping to enrich themselves by demanding ransom before releasing their victims. Such monies are also used to purchase more weapons to sustain the practice. For some cases please see the Table 1

**Village raids:** By village raids, we mean a situation where local communities in northern Nigeria are usually attacked by armed bandits, who kill and loot their resources. The most recent raid of villages was that which took place in Kerawa, Zareyawa and Minda in Kaduna State, where about 100 armed gangs attacked the villages leaving about 50 people dead with several of them wounded (Aljazeera, March 2, 2020). Most village raids are carefully planned with some members of the communities serving as insiders, and supplying all the needed information for successful operations.

**Highway Robbery:** Mounting of road blocks on major highways in the northern axis to extort valuables

Table 1: Patterns of Rural Banditry in Northwestern Nigeria

Form of Banditry	Selected Instances/Indicators
Kidnapping	<p>A catholic priest was kidnapped in Ankuwa, Kachia Local Government of Kaduna State on March 25, 2019.</p> <p>Twin sisters were kidnapped in Daura village, Zurmi Local Government Area of Zamfara State on October 21, 2018.</p> <p>A North Korean Medical Doctor was kidnapped Tsafe Local Government Area in Zamfara State on March 25, 2019.</p> <p>20 caregivers were kidnapped in Jibya Local Government Area of Katsina State on December 23, 2018.</p>
Village Raids	<p>Motorcycle-riding gunmen attacked Kwara Village in Shinkafi District of Zamfara State Killing about 30 persons on March 5, 2019.</p> <p>Gunmen on motorcycles stormed Magami village in Maradun District of Zamfara State, killing and maiming several persons on December 23, 2018.</p> <p>Scores of suspected bandits raided Gwaska village in Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State, killing 45 persons on May 6, 2018.</p> <p>On April 28, 2018, 40 miners were killed at Janruwa Village and a week later (May 5th), 71 people were killed in Gwaska (these are villages in Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State).</p>
Highway Robbery	<p>Travelers were attacked by suspected bandits near Gidam Busa along Kaduna-Abuja expressway on July 22, 2018.</p> <p>Gunmen attacked travelers at Mashaya Mariki, along Sokoto -Tur eta road on October 9, 2018.</p> <p>Thers have been perennial incidents on Kadun-Zaria-Funtua-Katsina highway until date</p>
Cattle Rustling	<p>In 2013, over 1,000 cows were stolen by armed-to-theteeth rustlers from a farm belonging to the former Vice President, Namadi Sambo, in the Birin-Gwari area of Kaduna State.</p> <p>Zamfara State accounted for 446 of the 470 incidents of cattle rustling fatalities recorded in four affected states of northern Nigeria: Kano, Katsina, Niger and Zamfara in 2015/2016.</p>

Source: Okoli and Ugwu (2019:215)

#### Impacts of Youth Banditry in Northern Nigeria

Youth banditry in northern Nigeria has impacted significantly on the security and socio-economic development of the region. For instance, the long security enjoyed during British colonial rule where people could leave the doors of their house and travel long distances from one town to the other at night as narrated by Momah (2015:5) - because safety was assured and stealing was the exception- has all gone due to banditry. In fact, available sources have shown that more deaths have occurred as a result of youth

banditry in the northern region of Nigeria. One of such sources is the West African Network for Peace-building (WANEP, 2020:2), which in one of its policy briefs reports that:

A total of 6,319 deaths, including women and children were recorded between June, 2011 and May, 2019 in the state [of Zamfara]. In addition, an estimated 4,983 women were widowed, 25,050 children orphaned, and 190,340 others internally displaced between June, 2011 and May, 2019 in Zamfara state. In Katsina state over 2,000 people have been killed, 500 communities destroyed and over 33,000 people displaced. Further report also revealed that over 10,000 cattle were lost while 2,688 hectares of farmlands and 10,000 houses destroyed within 2011 and mid 2018 in Zamfara state. Also they recorded the loss 147,800 vehicles and motor-cycles between June, 2011 and May, 2019. In November, 2019 estimated 4,000 people were also internally displaced in Shiroro LGA of Niger state alone.

Another report has it that in early March, 2020, banditry activities led to the displacement of over 210,000 persons internally while 35,000 refugees moved to Maradi in Niger Republic where they camped in Madou in Tahoua region, Dan Daaji Makauo, Garin and Guidan Roudmji (ACAPS, 2020). In Yar Galadima in Dan Sadau Emirate of Maru LGA, Zamfara state, the members of vigilante group were reportedly attacked on April 7, 2014 during their meeting by 50 bandits who came on motorcycles killing over 200 and injuring 50 persons (Rufa'i, 2018a:69). The above source also confirmed that there are more destitute, orphans and widow in rural areas in Zamfara state as a result of continuous raiding, theft and raping by bandits.

Besides, "banditry has hampered agricultural activities and heightened the risk of acute food security. Livelihoods have been disrupted, fear and insecurity among the population have increased and IDPS and host communities are competing for scarce resources such as water, land and food. Protection concerns are heightened for women, children and the elderly, which security food and WASH [Water Sanitation and Hygiene] are priority needs in affected areas" (ACAPS, 2020)

Another impact of youth banditry is the fears of possible emergence of another terrorist set in the north. According to Momah (2015:6) Boko Haram insurgency "started as a ragtag armed gang trying to eke out a living through armed robbery, and kidnapping using hit-and-run tactics" Also Okoli (2019) who states that banditry in northern Nigeria has "degenerated into a complex national emergency with dire territorial implications", equally hinted that it was the same manner Boko Haram insurgency commenced. Thus, "... from sporadic incidents, Boko Haram began launching systematic attacks targeted at individuals, communities and, eventually, the state."

The economic loss as a result of youth banditry by the north has also been recorded. One of such losses was the kidnap of a French engineer, Mr. Francis Colump working on a Wind Mill in Katsina state by gunmen on December 10, 2010. The contract was awarded by President Umaru Yar'Adua in 2010 to Vergnet Wind Energy Company of France at the cost of N4.5 billion, and was to generate 10MW of electricity to southern end of Katsina state, including Suntua, Malumfashi, Danju, Musawa, Kafur, Kankara, Sabuwa, Matzu, Bakari, Dandume, and Paskari LGAs. However, The Gunmen who were about 30 divided themselves into two - while some of them attacked a nearby police station to divert attention, the other group went and adopted Mr. Francis Colump. Two security guards and one policeman were shot by the armed gang. With the kidnap, work was terminated and the Wind Mill became vandalized (Momah, 2015:201). Additionally, Suleiman (2019) has reported "that armed banditry has crippled the local economies of the northwest with food production, pastoralism, and animal husbandry dropping by about fifty percent".

Ringim (2020) on the other hand has explained that in the first quarters of 2019 alone, 685 kidnapping took place in northern Nigeria, "costing families hundreds of millions of naira hence, rendering many of them financially impotent in this current harsh economic conditions". The government of Zamfara state alone is reported to have spent 17 billion naira on security related matters following the upsurge of banditry in the state (Suleiman, 2019). Assuming there was no banditry and such amount was channeled into setting up of manufacturing plants/ industries, the citizens would have benefited directly or indirectly in solving their problem of poverty. No wonder over half (67.5%) of the population living in the state are under poverty (BBC reality Check, 14 April, 2019).

#### **Curbing Youth Banditry in Northern Nigeria Using State Police, Traditional Rulers/Elders**

As noted early, the menace of youth banditry in northern Nigeria is so alarming that if not properly handled and timely addressed the next generations will continue to suffer for it. This therefore necessitates the focus of this section in discussing the measures to curb the act. Although several solutions have been put forward by some scholars (Okoli, 2019; Ringim, 2020; Nwabufo, 2020; WANEP, 2020), our focus shall be on the creation of state police and the role of traditional rulers/elders in curbing the threat of youth banditry.

To begin with, "[a] state police is a specially organised and highly trained body, acting under state rather than local authority, and constantly employed in the prevention of crime, the apprehension of criminals, and the protection of life and property generally throughout the state and especially in the rural and sparsely settled districts" (see Corcoran, 1924:544). A lot of states in modern society have embraced state policing. In country like the United States, state police was created to, among other things, respond



to the increasing consciousness on the part of rural and suburban district dwellers “of a need for a greater degree of police protection” (Corcoran, 1924:544). A source also has revealed that both the federal and state police were created due to the limited ability of police department and private detective agencies to handle the “tumult” that confronted the US between 1900 and 1920, and that Pennsylvania was the first to create a modern state police in US (Britannica, n.d). In Nigeria state police is not completely a new phenomenon as both colonial and postcolonial Nigeria operated a state police until it was removed from the constitution in 1968 (Adedeji, n.d: 7). However, as it stands today, Section 214 (1) of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria as amended forbids state police by declaring that: “...no other police force [apart from the federal police] shall be established for the federation or any other part thereof”. Like the constitution, some have argued that state police is not necessary for the country because Nigeria is not yet ripe for it; the fears that its creation will be abused by state executives who may like to witch-hunt their perceived opponents using police at their beck and call; the cost of funding etc. (Nwogwugwu and Kupoluyi, 2015; Adedeji, n.d). Despite these wide claims, it has become imperative for state governments in northern Nigeria to have their police force to combat youth banditry in the region through the recruitment of their own citizens at the local levels and train, equip and deploy them to police the very locality(s) where they live or work.

The advantages of this measure are many. For instance, since the state police personnel will be recruited within the community and are familiar with their terrains and the people in their respective areas of jurisdiction, any strange face could easily be identified and pick up for interrogation. Also there will be community ownership of policing because local people will feel carried along as their sons and daughters are part of the security team. Another importance of this measure is in the use of language which the state police personnel can utilize in gathering intelligence against banditry in their domains. Moreso, the protocols involved in getting approval for the deployment of federal police to handle emergency situation in states are usually cumbersome and thus makes matters worse (Nwogwugwu and Kupoluyi, 2015:4). However, all this will come to an end with state police as they will be immediate response to banditry attacks given that they will be working in communities where the attacks likely occur. In the US, for instance, recruitment into the state police force is based not on political considerations but on persons with the highest physical and moral qualifications and with more than average intelligence (Corcoran, 1924:544), thus bringing same to bear in the fresh recruitment of personnel into state police in the north will help to stem the tide of corruption, nepotism and inefficiency associated with federal police.

Traditional rulers rather than conniving with the bandits to unleash mayhem on the people through youth banditry (WANEP, 2019:4), can actually collaborate with the elders and the state police to flush youth banditry out of the region. This is because traditional rulers such as emirs are highly respected by their subjects in the north, and since they possess both spiritual and political powers their roles are inexhaustible. The elders too can help through moral persuasion and role modeling in keeping the youth away from banditry.

### Conclusion

The study discussed youth banditry in northern Nigeria with focus on the security and socio-economic impacts on the people of the region. To provide a clear understanding, some of the basic concepts were conceptualized. Also a brief history of banditry in northern Nigeria, the factors that influence youth banditry, their mode of operation, etc. were treated in the study. As revealed in the study, youths are the major perpetrators of banditry in northern Nigeria and that their activities have grave security and socio-economic impacts on the entire region. Young people are supposed to be agents of development and a source of pride to their communities because of the potentials embedded in them. However, the inability of the northern elite to assist them in channeling these potentials towards productive ventures for the benefit of region, they have rather chose to neglect, marginalize and fail to cater adequately for them thereby contributing to this evil practice against the people. Notwithstanding the rationale, Banditry is bad, and must not be allowed to continue endlessly by all and sundry. This is why the various efforts by federal and states governments of the affected region in bringing lasting solutions to the menace of banditry in northern Nigeria must be commended. While appreciating specifically, the proposal by Governor El Rufa'i of Kaduna state on embedding security agents amongst herders to protect them against armed rustlers; tightening states borders to prevent trans-border influx of rustlers; and most importantly, implanting computer microchips in the animals to monitor their movements and prevent armed bandits from stealing (cited in Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016:1), the creation of state police, the use of traditional rulers/ elders will go a long way towards solving the menace of youth banditry in the region.

### Recommendations

In line with our discussion and addition to some recommendations above this study wishes to recommend as follows:

1. Leaders in northern Nigeria should fulfill their obligations to their youth as contained in the 2009 National Youth Policy document to make them better citizens and prevent them from taking to crime. In view of this, their education, welfare, skill development etc. should be of utmost priorities.
2. All borders within and between Nigeria and her immediate neighbours in the North should be

properly policed to check the influx of bandits into the country.

3. The National Assembly should come up with amendment to section 214 (1) of the 1999 constitution to allow for the creation of state police so that northern states can recruit, train, equip, fund and deploy their own police personnel to strategic locations in the north to combat the menace of youth banditry.
4. The efforts of the communities through the creation of vigilante groups must be commended. However, due to the allegation that some of them are culpable, proper background checks and adequate monitoring mechanisms should be considered when creating such groups.
5. Politicians who failed elections should either challenge their results in the court of law or adopt better strategies against future elections rather than engaging the youth to take to crime as a way of getting at their opponents.
6. Herders and cattle owners should practice animal husbandry or ranching with adequate security. This is not only healthy and wealthy but could also prevent incessant cattle rustling due to long distance grazing
7. Individuals residing in the north, like in other parts of Nigeria, should take their personal security very serious by knowing when and where to travel, who to relate with etc to avoid being kidnapped by young bandits
8. Communities must put their eyes on their youth to fetch out those with questionable characters for correction before they graduate to banditry.
9. There should be a massive deployment of security personnel on highways to check the activities of banditry across the region
10. Combating youth banditry is not an easy task. Therefore all hands must be on desk through collaboration with the security in information sharing and intelligent gathering, etc., to nip the dastardly act in the bud.

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