



Banditry and Ungoverned Spaces in Nigeria: A Case Study of Kaduna and Zamfara States

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Abstract

Bandits perpetrate acts of banditry such as kidnapping, rape, wanton killing and so on. They perpetrate these acts while trans-locating from place to place, traversing the rugged outskirts of states called ungoverned spaces which they convert as their place of abode. These spaces are used by bandits as safe havens for living, planning, training and indoctrinating, securing access to weapons and equipment and engaging in illegal smuggling. Bandits find the environment conducive due to its rugged terrains, complex mass of ridges, arid climatic conditions, crisscrossing seasonal streams and rivers as well as adequate cover from observation and direct fire from state forces. The objective of this paper is to examine the effect of the existence of banditry on the ungoverned spaces of Kaduna and Zamfara states. The environmental crime theory was applied while relying on interviews (anonymous identity) and extensive secondary data in the paper. The effects of this menace which was found to be depletion of tourisms, and reduction in foods production, among others. The efforts of governments at all levels to curb the menace of banditry and recover the ungoverned spaces were discussed while proffering viable ways forward, which include synergy of efforts by governments of the two states to combat the menace and enhancement of the judicial system amongst others, as appropriate recommendations for dealing with the menace.

Keywords: Bandits, Banditry, Ungoverned Spaces, Government, Crime.

Introduction

Globally, one very devastating issue that nations have continued to grapple with are those of crimes. The various vices of crime come in shades and shapes ranging from just mere theft to complicated banditry which would often be destructive to lives, properties or even both. The survival and well-being of an affected nation could spell doom if this crime of banditry is not curbed and degraded decisively. According to Mburu (1999), “the crime of banditry have remained a source of wider political and security problems in a turbulent geopolitical environment of nations.”

Banditry is an organized crime characterized by the exercise of physical force as to inflict injuries on or cause damage/death on a person(s) or property as the case may be (Tamuno, 1991). Additionally, Osagie (1995) corroborated that “all forms of banditry involve the use of force be it a



legitimate or illegitimate act.” Perpetrators of this crime are called bandits. They are person(s) that are outlawed, proscribed or best described as lawless marauders. Under the umbrella of banditry, they perpetrate vices or acts such as kidnapping, rape, wanton killing, etc. They perpetrate this by translocating from place to place, traversing the rugged outskirts of states called ungoverned spaces which is also their place of abode.

Ungoverned spaces, according to Whelan (2006:64) refers to a territorial sphere where firm governmental control is lacking. He opined that it is “a physical or non-physical area where there is an absence of state capacity or political will to exercise control.” This may include land areas, maritime spheres and cyberspace domains, where state control is grossly deficient or absent. “The physical space can be land area” such as forests or maritime areas while the “non-physical space refers to a financial space” where the criminals, bandits or terrorists raise and move monies and other resources without any impediment; whether technological driven or legal.

It is a new concept applied to an old problem that constitutes lack of effective government presence in parts or places within its territory. It is a direct reflection of the inability of the state to effectively perform its minimal statutory functions which are exercise of monopoly of the use of force, full territorial control and provision of basic social services. Such a scenario often gives room for illicit and subversive activities such as banditry and other criminal vices.

In Brazil, social banditry lasted from the year 1920 to 1939 when it was conquered. Though, there were several banditry groups across the country, the most popular was the one led by Virgulino Ferreira da Silva popularly known as Lampiao who was killed along with his group in 1939. The group terrorized and invaded so many states in Brazil using high calibre weapons and knives as at that era and would often escape to the mountain areas which was their safe haven. They occupied the northeastern part of the country which is described as rugged with a complex mass of ridges and mountain ranges as well as arid climatic conditions. The space is fortified and often made untenable for state forces to penetrate.

The horn of Africa is made up of 8 countries which are Djibouti, Eretria, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda. This region has overtime, experienced a symmetrical connection between regional political instability, poverty and lawlessness which are appendages to banditry within the region. The region has experienced roving banditry which is in four different groups namely, Kafagne, Ngoroko, Faloul and the Shifta (Mburu, 1999). These groups of bandits freely roam the horn of Africa presenting themselves in different forms. They have been a source of wider political and security problems in a turbulent geopolitical environment in the horn, creating a deliberate and unstable national security environment that leaves much to be desired. Additionally, traditional banditry in the horn of Africa has been explored as a vocation where individuals waged war against greedy village chiefs or the political unit on behalf of the local community while living in the forest and mountainous areas as hermits until justice was exacted.

Banditry in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon. It had existed prior to the 1980s in various forms across the country. It is a violent crime whose lethality has evolved from an old practice into organized crime conducted with immense sophistication and efficiency. It is now characterized by the use of modern weapons, accompanied by rape, armed robbery, kidnapping activities, cattle rustling, as well as organized attacks on villages and communities. Their operations are both trans-



locational and transnational while occupying various ungoverned spaces (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014). According to Momale et al (2019), it is fairly established that banditry in Kaduna and Zamfara states has been trending from when it was a minor attack on travelers on the road to now that it has become a major issue of invading villages and towns, as well as an open challenge to instituted authorities of a state. In Kaduna and Zamfara states, bandits occupy ungoverned spaces of Kamuku and Dansadau forests respectively where they use as abodes and training areas. They periodically invade various villages at will and carry out atrocities such as wanton killings, kidnapping, cattle rustling, armed robbery, raping women/girls of attacked communities, destruction of buildings/infrastructure, arson, political thuggery, armed robbery and forceful seizures of farm produce and farmlands, amongst others.

Conceptualization

Banditry

Banditry has existed right from so many centuries ago. Philosophers, researchers and scholars have viewed banditry from several perspectives. While some viewed it based on their plight and vulnerability against imminent disadvantage and sufferings due to ill administration by governments, others see it from points of the description of the acts carried out by bandits. Osaghae (1995) noted, however, that all forms of banditry involve the use of force, whether it is legitimate as protagonists of the state or illegitimate as is the case when force is applied by the murderer, robber or bandit. In this definition, the use of force is considered a necessary element of banditry. Such force when used inflicts pain which could lead to murder, rape and all forms of destruction. Furthermore, Domenack (1978) defines banditry as the use of force whether overt or covert, in order to snatch from individuals or groups, something of value that they are not disposed to give of their own free will.

Slatta (1994) also posited that banditry involves the taking away of property by force or the threat of force, often by a group of men that usually operate in the shadows, often on the fringes of the society, in geographically isolated areas. Conklin (1992) adds that banditry is a proto-type, unprovoked and unpredictable kind of crime most feared by the public that usually involves theft with violence or threat of violence by a person with whom the victim has had no previous contact. From the point of view of Shalangwa (2013), banditry is the practice of raiding and attacking victims by members of an armed group, whether or not premeditated, using weapons of offence or defense especially in semi-organized groups for the purpose of overpowering the victim and obtaining loot or achieving some political goals. Such bandits are usually regarded as outlaws and desperate lawless marauders who do not have a definite residence or destination.

Acts of banditry have been perceived by different societies in different ways and should therefore be considered by identifying its essential features within specified historical contexts. According to White (1981), a bandit is a person who has been forced to become an outlaw by robbing the rich and giving to the poor. He further added that the poor state of the oppressed can functionally be attributed to the attitudes and behaviours of the rich in the society resulting in robbing the rich to pay the poor. This description portrays a bandit as someone preoccupied with seeking revenge on behalf of the maligned in society. On the other hand, Manderson (2010) asserts that bandits are outlaws who failed to stand trial becoming fugitives by the law. Society may declare such a person wanted, dead or alive and that gives any new member of society license to kill the declared bandit with impunity. From another point of view, Wartyo (2011) defines social banditry as the act of crime



committed either by the residents of a village or people in the low economic and social strata in order to fulfil their basic needs. Such acts are a response to the structural pressures, which deprive people of access to the natural resources that support their lives.

Hobsawm (1959) proposed the construct “social bandit” and considers them as peasant outlaws who maintain some respect within peasant society and are sometimes considered by their people as heroes, champions, avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps leaders of liberation. In any case, they are seen as men to be admired, helped and supported. He further suggests that the link between banditry and violence is tied to terrorism, well rooted in peasant culture. This is what Blumel (2007) refers to as ‘ancient banditry’ or ‘traditional banditry’, which existed in the primitive or pre-colonial time. Blok (1972) further added that bandits are persons regarded by the state as outlaws, but whose umbilical cord is tied to the moral order of the peasant community.

Mikhail (1978) submits that in the Russian state, banditry is seen as one of the most honourable ways of life. The bandit is seen as the people’s hero, defender and saviour. Such bandits are the implacable enemies of the state and the whole social order; they are ready to die fighting against the entire civilization of the aristocratic Chinokniks and government priesthood. In agreement with to this notion, Rife (2011) opines that the social bandit flaunts authority, lives with abandon and champions the causes of the masses against elite oppression. It could however be argued that instead of championing the cause of the poor, men are more likely to turn to banditry out of desperation and hard economic realities than for vague notions of righting wrongs.

Consequently, Sullivan (2012) observed that contemporary banditry has changed in scope, nature and extent from historic antecedents. He maintains that modern-day bandits are criminally inclined insurgents and conventional terrorists. He argued plausibly that these groups are a cog in the wheel of democratic governance and free-market economy. To Bunker and Sullivan (1998), bandits are ‘gangs, criminal enterprises, insurgents or warlords who dominate social life and erode the bods of effective security and the rule of law’. In congruent to these assertions, Williams (1998) conceived bandits as transnational gangs and criminals who extend their reach and influence by co-opting individuals and organisations through bribery, coercion and intimidation; they do so in order to facilitate, enhance or protect their own activities. Bandits in the era of globalization, therefore, are more than mere rural gangs and criminals. The act has metamorphosed into a network, exerting strong forces on the remote areas and extending its tentacles to urban settings; the expansion being accompanied by an increasing level of violence. The scope, dimension and operational pattern of banditry have been enlarged around the world and in Africa in particular.

Mburu (1999) opines that the motive for contemporary banditry is the pauperization of people living in a harsh physical environment. The activities of bandits are inhumane and lead to violence, causing insecurity challenges that encourage other forms of criminalities. The large scale effects of contemporary banditry cannot be justified on any ground when compared with what existed in the past, when bandits were feted as heroes by the peasant population, celebrated for their opposition to the oppression of the rich or predation of the government. These bandits are emerging as a serious impediment to democratic governance and sustainability around the world.

Mburu (1999) in his study of the Horn of Africa, further observed that banditry had transmuted from what he called ‘innocuous tribal sport’ into terrorism unleashed by hardened former guerilla fighters



that were used to killing and having little respect for the laws of the land, or any symbol of formal authority. These new forms of banditry even involve both inter and intra-ethnic and cross-border raids for livestock. Crummey (1999) however argued that banditry was indeed a significant African phenomenon in the 19th century and embedded in rural societies. Its motive was to protest against the centralism of authority and it was recognized by rural dwellers. Furthermore, traditional banditry has been explored as a vocation where individuals waged war against greedy village chiefs or the political unit on behalf of the community while living in the forest as hermits until justice was exacted. He further explained that local languages have specific terms for bandits and if the 'criminals' in question are not locally recognized as bandits and labelled as such in African languages, then they are not bandits. Additionally, Mburu (1999) further noted that similar experience in Somalia has also shown how banditry can be exported to another country through refugees that include former regular soldiers who hide sophisticated firearms in the bush for use to rob or execute rivals.

Therefore, banditry is an organized crime carried out by individual(s) who by way of conspiracy have resolved to invade the safety, tranquility and secure nature of a whole or part of a nation-state. Their conspired resolve would often be unleashed in form of various vices such as killing, kidnapping, arson, etc preceded by the infliction of terror from an environment that offers and affords them safety against being caught and prosecuted. Their infliction of terror could be determined by their level of armament, operative maneuver and inhuman treatment to their captives which could be a whole village, country or state, as the case may be.

Ungoverned Space

The concept of 'ungoverned space' pervades discussion of global security threats and dominates analysis and policy approaches to different countries across the world (Piombo, 2007; Hazen, 2010). Many analysts think of ungoverned space in strictly security terms. One of such analysts is Fauziya (2017) who described ungoverned spaces as zones that lay beyond the reaches of the central government. The prevailing view holds that the more remote they are, the more vulnerable they become to the lure of violent radicalization and extremism. Tenet (2003) also defined ungoverned spaces as vast stretches of lawless zones and veritable "no man's lands" where extremist movements find shelter and can win the breathing space to grow. Furthermore, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2014) described ungoverned space in its report, as 'safe havens' where bandits/terrorists/criminals plan, train and indoctrinate, secure access to weapons and equipment, have the ability to engage in illegal smuggling to generate income and derive benefits from the existence of staging grounds and transit zones.

In reality, however, ungoverned spaces are also marked typically by a significant absence or limited provision of basic social services, making such places vulnerable to the control of criminal networks, radical extremists or other groups that offer alternatives to state authority by addressing, or spearheading agitations against, long held political, economic or social grievances of particular communities. This is similar to the position of the United States Department of Defense which described ungoverned space as a place where government at all or any level is incapable or unenthusiastic to control, effectively administer, or have an influence on the local population (OUSD, 2007). It described the space as a location where a sovereign government does not fully govern. That is under-governed or ill-governed, as a result of measures, not limited to issues like



lack of capacity to govern, deficiency in political will, acceptability of the government, unresolved conflict, or restrictive norms of behaviour. This definition, not only defined the ungoverned space but also went ahead to state reasons why they may remain ungoverned. It is noteworthy to state that all the reasons raised as responsible for the creation and existence of this space apply to Nigeria and most of the regions in Africa (Ukwuoma et al, 2018).

Ungoverned spaces occur as much in a national context as in a sub-regional or regional context. Indeed, the so-called ungoverned sub-regional spaces are nothing more than an aggregation of ungoverned national spaces. When such spaces lie in contiguous border areas between states, it exacerbates the challenges of ungoverned spaces. Experts have identified six drivers of violent conflicts, which are also pertinent to ungoverned space. These include lack of quality governance and transparency, ethnic rivalry, religious extremism, mismanagement of land and natural resource, declining economic conditions and proliferation of small arms and light weapons (Ejeviome and Oseloka, 2019).

Four clear manifestations of ungoverned space currently pertain to Nigeria which are banditry, terrorism, herdsmen/farmers' conflict and piracy/militancy. In Kaduna and Zamfara states, banditry activities have extensively taken hold in various parts of the states. Indeed, very few parts of these states are exempt from this menace (Ejeviome and Oseloka, 2019). The ungoverned space of the states which includes the forested parts of the states and forcefully collected farmlands making up their territories have remained potential dens and safe havens of these bandits from which they plan and launch their operations. These locations lack government presence which at least should be by way of police deployments, making it look like a no-man's land. As much as the military support to the states, through several military operations to take hold of these ungoverned spaces, it does not in any way derelict the need of the states to show presence and take charge of these places as long as they remain part of the state's territory. Therefore, ungoverned space is and should be an issue of concern.

Theoretical Framework

This paper will rely on environmental crime theory which deals with the study of crime, criminality and victimization in relation to particular places. In 1971, Ray Jeffrey published "Crime Prevention through Environmental Design". He examined the role in which environments, especially areas of non-human existence with rugged identities, play in crime. He posited that crime, locations used and location of the victim are three strong criteria for any criminal success. This explains the banditry in ungoverned spaces in Kaduna and Zamfara states and the vulnerability of rural communities in sustaining the activities of bandits. In his postulation, he suggested ways of deflating crime through the re-shaping of the crime-enhancing environment. It was based on this environmental crime theory that he coined the term "environmental criminology" which is studied in institutions across the world within criminology as a subject.

In the 1980s, Paul and Patricia Brantingham did a further study on this theory, putting the focus of criminological study on environmental or contextual factors that can influence criminal activity. These five factors are space (geography), time, law, offender and target or victim. They are components that have been found to be necessary and sufficient conditions, for without one, the other four, even together, will not constitute a criminal incident (Brantingham & Brantingham,



1991). Environmental criminologists examine crime in relation to geographic locations which could be an enhancing ground or a scene where crime had occurred such as the ungoverned spaces of Kaduna Zamfara states. They are interested in land usage by the criminal bandits, traffic patterns and navigational strategies of the geographical landscape across narrow paths as well as the daily activities and movements of criminal bandits and their captives.

Methodology

This paper relied on extensive interviews of individuals' especially local farmers (anonymous) in villages near some of the ungoverned spaces inhabited by bandits in Kaduna and Zamfara states. The interview of the farmers is predicated on the fact that they carry out farming and rearing of livestock in the expanse of lands that run unto the forest perimeters. Hence, their observation of activities within and around these spaces were adjudged to be cogent for this paper. Relevant government officials (anonymous) were also interviewed so as to understand and ascertain relevance of data as well as authentication of facts gathered. Officials of government agencies such as Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC), and forestry were also interviewed. Additionally, a wide reference to secondary data was made so as to give temerity and relevance to the primary data collected for subsequently required analysis.

Nexus between banditry and ungoverned spaces

Banditry is viewed, within the context of the state system, as a threat to the security of a nation. It involves all forms of illegal and criminal activities across the nation backed by the use of arms and dangerous weapons with which they execute mayhem on their prey which could be persons or communities from a launching point. This launching point could be anywhere bandits find very conducive to accommodate them and their practices. Often times, these places would be outside the environment or domain of state citizens known as ungoverned spaces. Due to lack of government coverage and reach to these spaces, they become a comfortable den for use by bandits to galvanize, mobilize forces for expansionist purposes, establish themselves, consolidate, plan, organize, fundraise, recruit, train and operate (Clark & Mansour, 2013). They also use the spaces for their camps, execution of captives, keeping of captives, transnational transactions especially on the proliferation of arms, sales of persons captured or kidnapped and a planning area for onslaught onto projected areas for invasion. These descriptions befit the position of environmental crime theory described by Ray Jeffrey (aforementioned). The more available these spaces are and the more out-of-reach they are from the government, the more comfortable, habitable, conducive and a safe haven they become for bandits and their cohorts. This was buttressed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2014) which described ungoverned space in its report, as 'safe havens' where bandits/terrorists/criminals plan, train and indoctrinate, secure access to weapons and equipment, have the ability to engage in illegal smuggling to generate income and derive benefits from the existence of staging grounds and transit zones.

The expanse of ungoverned spaces run into thousands of kilometres in both length and area and their rugged nature attracts these bandits to occupy it no matter the expanse. The expanse and the terrain provide maneuverability, camouflage and concealment from both ground and air observations as well as fire. These further buttresses the position highlighted by Paul and Patricia Bratingham (1980) who emphasized on space (geography) in the aforementioned theory as one of the major factors

used by criminals who occupy ungoverned spaces and environments. The more ungoverned spaces exist in a nation state without the evidenced reach of government, the more vulnerable the spaces would be for bandits to occupy it. This invariably means that a nation that is able to keep presence in its ungoverned spaces would likely have less or no presence of bandits in those spaces. These, therefore, makes the concept of banditry and ungoverned spaces directly proportional to each other.

Geography of ungoverned spaces in Kaduna and Zamfara states

Fig 1.1 Map of Nigeria highlighting the north western states of the country



Source: Getamap.com

The north-west Nigerian geographical environment is a Sahel frontier (having the characteristics of a desert environment). The ungoverned space which interacts with bandits or banditry acts are closed rugged terrains within Zamfara and Kaduna states. These closed environments are the Kamuku forest and game reserve, Dansadau forest and game reserve and part of Alawa forest and game reserve which is shared between Kaduna state and Niger state. It is imperative to note that the part of the Alawa forest shared by Kaduna state falls largely, if not completely, into the sparse expanse of Chikun LGA. Suffice to mention that these three forests intertwine and overlap into the other, thus making the spaces an expansive one that could accommodate numerous colonies of gangs of bandits operating from varying locations within the space.

Kamuku Forest and Game Reserve

The Kamuku National Park and forest is located in Kaduna State, Nigeria, with a total area of about 1,120 km² (430 sq mi). The park has a typical Sudanian Savanna ecology. The park is located in the west of Kaduna State and is adjacent to the Kwiambana forest in Zamfara state. It was established in 1936 as the Native Authority Forest Reserve of Birnin Gwari under the Northern Nigeria Government. It was upgraded from a state Game Reserve to a National Park in May 1999,



in part due to the success of a community-based project promoting sustainable resource usage, managed by Savanna Conservation Nigeria, a national NGO. The park has a combination of flat terrain and rugged ridges and passes, sloping gradually upwards to the Birnin Gwari Ridge along the eastern boundary. Natural features of interest include the Dogon Ruwa Waterfalls; the Goron Dutse, a large isolated inselberg with a smooth surface stratified in a pattern of black and white squares; and the Tsaunin Rema, a hill made of large boulders piled on top of each other, with a large population of rock hyraxes. Vegetation is Guinea Savanna with some transitional Sudan Savanna elements in places. The park and the nearby forest reserves have some of the best preserved blocks of this ecosystem in the country.

Dansadau Forest and Game Reserve

The Zamfara forest (Dansadau forest and game reserve) located in the Sahelo-Sudanian zone of northwest Nigeria, form the larger part of an ecosystem extending into Maradi in the Republic of Niger with an approximated total area of 3367km². The forest was sparsely populated with marginal areas prior to the 19th century and also contains four legal encapsulated farming enclaves surrounded by farming communities. About 150,000 people live in the four enclaves and the 56 bordering villages west of Zamfara reserve. The forest sustains livelihood which is based on crop or livestock production or a combination of both. Rainfall means range from 650mm in the north to 925mm in the south while the vegetation is of the northern Sudanian savannah type. The predominantly rugged terrain and sandy soil environment have a low nitrogen, phosphorus and organic matter content, low water holding capacity and is susceptible to drought. It is adjacent to three other forests which are the Gundumi, Dumburum and Kwimbana forests which lead into the Kamuku forest of Birnin Gwari, Kaduna state

Effects of banditry infesting ungoverned spaces

The effects of banditry infestation of ungoverned spaces may be positive to bandits. This is in terms of all it provides for them as afore discussed. However, its effect on surrounding villages, communities or states including captives are negative. These include:

- ***Depletion of tourism opportunity/foreign investment***

The forests mentioned above became parks for tourism in the states where they exist. They are special abodes for both florals and faunas (plants and animals), seasonal streams, interspersed rivers, natural terrestrial and geographical features and so on which both nationals and foreigners visit from time to time to catch a glimpse of nature. These visits generated revenues used by states at a time and subsequently, the bigger Nigerian state for economic and national development. The forests and parks were protected by forest guards who fight against poachers and hunters. Additionally, they served as points of research for members of the academia especially those in forestry, tourism and sciences.

The presence of the bandits has not only created a distortion in the activities in these forests and parks, it has caused the withdrawal of the forest and park guards who are not armed enough to challenge them, chased away many of the animals from their natural habitats, caused a no-revenue from tourism due to absence of tourists who have stopped going to the parks due to insecurity and depletion of state revenue which has also invariably decreased developmental revenue. This is in tandem with Muggah and Batchelor (2002) who posited that "...where this happens repeatedly on



a large scale, social investment often declines with broad ripple effects on both foreign investor confidence and overseas development assistance”. The presence of these bandits in these spaces has indeed caused more harm to tourism and investment potentials of these parks than good.

- ***Reduction in food production***

Surrounding either side of the vicinities of these forests and parks are extensive farmlands upon which farmers from surrounding villages’ farm. The extension of these farmlands in some parts protrude inwards into the forest as experienced in Zamfara forests and parks. The extensive nature of these farms makes great yield annually for Zamfara and Kaduna states. Thus, food production was adjudged to be bountiful and remained so year after year. Additionally, farmers in these areas were respected because they top the echelon through which immense revenues from farming were enjoyed by the state. These farming efforts were both in crops and in animal husbandry such as cattle, sheep and goats.

The presence of bandits in these spaces have not only caused a stoppage in farming activities around these forests, it has also caused massive refrain of farmers from going to their farms. This is due to fear of being killed or kidnapped for ransom as elaborated by aforementioned theory that described them as targets or victims of the bandits or criminals. Thus, causing a massive reduction in food production and food availability. This negativity was buttressed by Muggah and Batchelor (2002) who posited that “banditry can severely affect the supply of cash crops as public and commercial transportation to markets is often interrupted and consequently, farmers are forced to abandon commercial harvests”. The non-availability or limited availability of food could cause malnutrition and where limited access occurs, access to food could be made difficult due to scarcity and high rate of purchase. Either way it goes, drought could be imminent.

- ***Infliction of terror***

These ungoverned spaces occupied by these bandits are launching pads unto invasions of villages, communities or even roads where they kidnap unsuspecting persons for ransom. Sometimes they even kill when obstructed by anyone. The obvious stance here is that their operational launch including their charismatic hoods inflict terror on the environments they are invading which of course is made up of unsuspecting citizens. During this infliction of terror, affected individuals give up their belongings to the bandits for fear of being killed, maimed and in the case of girls and women, raped. Although, in most cases where women and girls are involved, they were often harassed, violated, raped and kidnapped even after they have given up their belongings. People in these villages, communities and societies live in perpetual fear as they can no longer freely go about their daily activities for fear of these bandits. This was buttressed by Osai Ojigho (2018:par.1-7), Director of Amnesty International Nigeria who posits that:

Insecurity is escalating in northwest Nigeria’s Zamfara state, with daily killings and kidnappings by bandits leaving villagers in constant fear of attack. When we visited the region, villagers told us they had pleaded with the government to help them after receiving warning letters from the bandits ahead of attacks but had received no protection. The Nigerian authorities have repeatedly claimed to be tackling the situation, but the mounting death toll tells a different story. On 27 July 2018, 18 villages in Anka local government area of Zamfara state were attacked, leaving at least 42 people dead.



At least 18,000 residents of the affected villages who were displaced over the weekend are now taking refuge at various locations in the local government headquarters.

Amnesty International Nigeria (2018) further reported that at least 371 people have been killed in Zamfara state in 2018 alone, and at least 238 of these killings took place after the deployment of military personnel. Villagers described a pattern where they receive warnings ahead of attacks, including by phone, ordering them to pay huge sums of money or be killed or abducted.

- ***Forced internal displacement***

The presence of these bandits in these spaces coupled with their menace against host villages, communities and societies has become devastating in terms of killings, destruction of properties, kidnapping, looting, rape and terror from untimed invasions. This has made individuals and their families feel highly insecure and have continued to leave their villages, communities or places of abode to other safe havens. These safe havens may not necessarily be internationally inclined but a relocation to other surrounding states for safety and survival. According to the rapid assessment report of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2019), Zamfara and Kaduna states have the highest number of internally displaced persons at 38,113 and 16,230 respectively. Gusau being the capital of Zamfara state has recorded the highest displaced number of individuals from other hit LGAs in the state. Similarly, in Kaduna state, most of the displaced persons from Birnin Gwari LGA reside in the state's capital and parts of Igabi LGA that is within the metropolitan area of the capital. Their leaving their communities were of course not planned but forced, thus, creating a lull in their life into a period of stability in their new-found abode. This forced displacement in no little measure has caused a reduction in the population of the states, a depletion in workforce and a psychological loss of confidence in the minds of displaced persons.

- ***Increase in out-of-school children and depreciation of the educational system***

A very important entity in the society that is affected by banditry in these states are children. Bandits from these spaces have not only invaded communities and villages, but they have in recent times continued to also invade schools (during which they abduct children). As much as there are cases where the children are abducted for ransoms which are demanded from their parents, guardians or even the state (Okoli and Agada, 2014), there are also cases where they have been abducted to be used as foot soldiers. This was buttressed in a report by UNICEF (2007) which posited that child soldiers within non-state armed groups may be trained and used for combat, assigned to support roles such as porters or messengers or used for tactical advantage as human shields or for political advantage in propaganda.

Even when ransoms are offered as an option for the release of the children by the families, they are rejected. This is because the abduction of the children by the bandits are for other ulterior purposes. This illicit act has made many parents to withdraw their children from schools, thus increasing the population of out of school children. According to a report by the West Africa Network for Building Peace (2019), out of the 10.5 million out-of-school children in Nigeria, 30 percent are in the North-West (Zamfara, Kaduna, Jigawa, Katsina, Sokoto, Kebbi, Kano). Besides, insecurity in the communities has a negative impact on young boys and girls, as school activities in vulnerable areas are disrupted. The few existing schools are unable to operate properly for fear of kidnap of students



or attacks and killing by bandits. This has also created instability in the educational system of the state, leaving a huge gap between the child and his formal education.

- ***Unemployment***

The presence of bandits in the spaces has caused loss of jobs in various sectors of the state economy. These sectors include forestry, tourism, agriculture, health, education, environment, just to mention a few. Many workers in these sectors of the economy have either quit their jobs or paid the supreme sacrifice of death borne from banditry invasions in localities where they work or dwell. Some of the workers have also lost their jobs due to incapacitation. According to Egwu (2015) the main assumption is that no nation can be safe and achieve economic growth and development if it fails to resolve issues of unemployment, corruption and governance, all of which may undermine the rule of law and be a bane to the welfare of its people, even if the state has the most powerful army or police force. It behooves on the affected states to make frantic efforts at stabilizing this situation so as to enhance its growth.

- ***Create distraction to governance***

Governments at all levels owe it a responsibility to provide good governance to the citizens of states. Good governance in this regard connotes the provision of national/state security, national development, socio-economic development as well as economic growth. The provision of all of these requires that governments at all levels concentrate on ensuring that citizens adequately reap the dividends of their leadership. Banditry occupation of the ungoverned spaces in these states has continued to be a source of distraction to governments of the states to the provision of the aforementioned dividends to citizens by the government.

These distractions have continued to occur following incessant invasions and attacks on citizens by bandits from the ungoverned spaces causing various degrees of mayhem both against the citizens and the state. They have become a point of attention for the government of the state resulting in the spending of the state resources in the fight against their existence in the ungoverned spaces instead of the utilization of the resources in the development of the states. Suffice to mention that although issues of corruption may evolve in the pretext of fighting these bandits, the carnage of the situation has become obviously devastating that corruptive tendencies could only be ascribed a mega percentage when compared to the extent of distractive effects in which banditry is having on governance in these states. Thus, the need for the governments of the states to develop necessary strategies for curbing the menace so as to ensure their concentration on providing the citizens with the much-needed dividends of governance. According to a government official (Personal interview, Abuja) who chose to be anonymous:

Security, peace, stability and good governance have always been regarded as a prerequisite for the achievement of any meaningful socio-economic development of any nation-state. However, challenges of threats such as banditry have continued to remain a major stumbling block in achieving this especially in the banditry infested areas of Kaduna and Zamfara states.



Governments' efforts at redeeming spaces from bandits

The governments of Kaduna and Zamfara states are specifically affected by this menace. Over time, governments (federal and states) have made frantic efforts aimed at ensuring the curbing of banditry within the two states and asserting various strategies with a view to ensuring a lasting solution to the problem. These efforts by these governments which has kinetic component was expected to create the enabling environment for a feasible non-kinetic approach at resolving the causative root of the menace and drawing a lasting solution that would be beneficial to all parties involved.

- **Federal Government Interventions through Deployment of the Armed Forces and Authorization of Military Operations**

The federal government of Nigeria intervened through kinetic means in the curbing of banditry in the ungoverned spaces of Kaduna and Zamfara states. These kinetic means were actualized through the deployment of the Nigerian Army and the Nigerian Air Force troops at various operation bases and the approval for the launching of various military operations within the two states to combat the menace. The operations were mainly carried out in the rural hinterlands (ungoverned spaces including forests) which the bandits converted into safe havens and operating bases from where they launch attacks on the rural areas, LGAs and towns in the states.

Series of operations were launched under the directives of the federal government by the Nigerian Armed Forces as renewed strategies to flush out the bandits and gain maximum control of the situation in the states. Notably among these operations was OP SHARAN DAJI launched in 2016 to curtail the activities of bandits particularly in the ungoverned spaces of Zamfara state and environ. The operation successfully engaged bandits within multiple fronts including the dreaded Dumburum forest, which stretches to neighbouring Niger Republic. The operation has continued to record strings of success as stolen cattle were recovered as well as firearms and ammunition of bandits. Simultaneously, OP AYEM AKPATUMA was conducted in Birnin Gwari, Igabi and Pan Dogeri axis in Kaduna state in 2018 to exploit the successes of the operations in Zamfara state by eliminating escaping bandits who had failed to surrender. Another notable operation that was carried out in both Kaduna and Zamfara states was OP HARBIN KUNAMA launched on 1 April 2019 to ensure the complete defeat of the bandits in the states. The operation recorded huge success as hundreds of bandits were apprehended and killed in the operation. The Defence Headquarters on, 10 May 2019, reorganized OP SHARAN DAJI by strengthening the operation with the acquisition and addition of new strategies, improved fighting equipment and additional manpower. The codename was changed from OP SHARAN DAJI to OP HADARIN DAJI.

Asides the additional troops deployed to Kaduna and Zamfara states in previous operations, the Nigerian Air Force launched OPERATION DIRANMIKIYA on 31 July 2018. It was an intensive air operation aimed at locating and neutralizing bandits and other criminal elements in the states in support of the ground forces (the Nigerian Army) with a view to restoring normalcy in the affected areas. Aircrafts like Alpha jets, Diamond 42 for surveillance, MIC 35 attacking helicopters, EC 135, Ogusta 109 helicopters, were all used to support the operation. The operation aided the destruction and neutralization of bandit camps. (HQ NAF – OPERATION DIRANMIKIYA - 2019).

In the same vein, the Nigerian Police launched Operation Puff Adder on 5 April 2018 which was a multi-agency strategy in collaboration with the Nigerian Armed Forces and the Department of State



Services (DSS). It was geared towards ridding Kaduna and Zamfara states of all forms of banditry activities and restoring normalcy to the states. The operation also recorded huge success. The federal government has not relented in availing necessary kinetic efforts against this menace in these two states to date.

- **State and Local Government Efforts**

The state governments of Kaduna and Zamfara states have over time battled against the overwhelming presence of the menace of banditry in the ungoverned spaces of the states and their environs. They have instituted several mechanisms aimed at eradicating, degrading and decimating banditry within its domain. These intensified efforts worked in synergy with the federal government's efforts thus the immense support through all the initiated kinetic operations. On the other hand, the non-kinetic effort of dialogue was also available to accommodate repentant bandits for further disarmament, demobilization and reintegration into the community or society.

Responses under the Administration of Governor Abdulaziz Yari in Zamfara State (2011 – 2019)

The administration of Governor Abdulaziz Yari of Zamfara state has witnessed and suffered major attacks unleashed by bandits in several villages since 2011 across all its LGAs. Several lives have been lost, individuals kidnapped, communities burnt, cattle rustled, farmlands destroyed, businesses lost amongst numerous others. Consequent to the persistent insecurity situation in the state, Governor Abdulaziz Yari exerted several efforts to contain the security problems in the state. According to Suleiman (2019), the government of Abdulaziz Yari alone spent over ₦17 billion for the strengthening and coordination of security formations in the state through intelligence gathering as well as state and local government security committees. In addition, equipment such as operational vehicles were provided to enable efficient operations in the state.

Another concerted effort made by the governor was intensified consultation and persuasion with the federal government to increase security formations in the state. Shinkafi (2018) opined that the governor provided sites for military barracks which birthed the establishment of 223 Battalion in 2013, 207 Air Force Quick Response Unit in 2016 and 1 Brigade Nigerian Army in 2018 to address the future shortfall of security personnel in the state. Abdulaziz Yari also made tremendous efforts to provide humanitarian support to the internally displaced persons. According to Shinkafi (2018), the governor spent Two Billion Five Hundred and Fifty Nine Million Naira (₦2,559,000,000.00) for relief packages. He also solicited support from relevant agencies such as NEMA, the Refugees Commission, the Dangote Foundation and the National Assembly for cooperation to aid in the provision of assistance for the affected persons.

The state government also opted for the idea of a peace deal and amnesty between the Zamfara state government and the leadership of the bandits in 2016. This was with a view to getting them to surrender their weapons to the state government as the best option for ensuring sustainable peace. As stated by Nadama (2018), the state government delegation led by the then deputy governor, Mallam Ibrahim Wakkala Liman and the bandits under the leadership of Buharin Daji had their first meeting on 15 December 2016 at Gobirawar Chali in Dansadau Emirate under Maru LGA. Three major issues during the dialogue were emphasized especially with the demands from the bandits clearly spelt out. First was the issue of the Yansakai which was decided must be stopped from the



wanton attacks on their communities. The second was the condition that security agents and vigilante groups must stop seizing their cattle and thirdly the government should not continue to neglect their communities in the area of developmental projects. The government submitted to these demands in exchange for the surrender of the bandits' arms and the promise not to invade any community while the peace deal lasted. The government also proposed some strategic measures of integrating the bandits back into their communities by providing soft grants for them to commence business as well as bringing some of them closer to the government.

It is the reconciliation and disarmament process according to Shinkafi (2018) that led to the recovery of over 3000 different types of weapons. He also asserted that the notorious gang leader of the bandits, Buharin Daji was killed in the same month of the reconciliation process. Despite all the strategies and efforts on the part of the government of Abdulaziz Yari to mitigate the problem, the menace of banditry persisted and even intensified beyond the government's control and public outcry. The peace deal and amnesty programme brought stability and relative peace in the state for only a few months with no recorded attacks in communities.

Nadama (2018) however opined that the peace deal collapsed with the resurgence of fresh killings in some communities with multiple deaths and loss of property worth millions of naira. The failure of the peace deal was attributed to many factors, some of which include; absence of political will from the side of the state government to implement the agreement it has entered with the bandits, non-implementation of rehabilitation and reconstruction measures to bring relief to the victims of the conflicts, as well as re-arresting of some members of the bandit by the operatives of the Department of Security Service (DSS) after they have signed the peace deal with the state. It was alleged that the peace pact was jeopardized after a close associate of Buharin Daji called Dogo Bangaje was intercepted, arrested and detained by the DSS. Others were of the opinion that some of the bandits' leaders heard about the huge amount of money being dashed out to Buharin Daji and his camp, so they decided to establish their own popularity within different areas in the ungoverned spaces thus extending their evil days.

Responses under the Administration of Governor Bello Mohammed Matawalle of Zamfara State (May 2019 – May 2020)

Governor Bello Matawalle who took over the reins of power as governor of Zamfara state in May 2019 from Abdulaziz Yari came with the mandate of restoring tranquility, security and orderliness in Zamfara state as a result of banditry which has become a recurring decimal in the state. In order to achieve this, he reviewed the security situation taking into cognizance the complex issues involved and he opted to dialogue with the bandits in order to promote justice, peace and an atmosphere of calmness amidst public outcry. The governor decided to undertake dialogue for several reasons one of which is ethnicity-based. He was of the posture that he could reach the hearts and minds of the bandits with a view to making them see the enormity of their actions. He reached out to make them understand that there are other means of resolving whatsoever is their pain or ill-feelings, and to make them understand that what they are perpetrating is against the laws of the state and nation and is not in the best of their interest if they do not desist.

To achieve this laudable objective, Governor Matawalle in collaboration with the police set up the Peace and Reconciliation Initiative under the leadership of the Commissioner of Police to peacefully negotiate a ceasefire by the bandits. It is necessary to note that negotiation of ceasefire with bandits



by a government or their representative may not be a conventional approach as most nations would hardly negotiate or dialogue with bandits. However, within Nigeria's political domain which fosters within the ambits of ethnic sentimentality, the idea and approach could have been viewed by the government of Zamfara state as civil. Also, achieving it would cause less collateral damage on both humans and socio-economic infrastructure of the state as would be the reverse in situations of military operations or kinetic efforts. This move by the governor was applauded by many and regarded as the ultimate solution to the menace. According to a news release by Channels Television on 10 August 2019, the decision to restore peace through dialogue with the bandits has received more boost from the then Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Tukur Yusuf Buratai who expressed that he had total confidence in the peace process to be an opportunity for the bandits to lay down their arms and key into the attainment of peace.

From another perspective, Gusau (2019) quoted the governor to have proclaimed during an event organized by the Nigerian Army in Gusau that repentant bandits who have embraced the peace deals now assist security operatives in the state to fight banditry by taming any recalcitrant bandit and submitting his weapon to the state government. In order to fulfil all righteousness as regards the peace process, the Zamfara state government announced its plan to establish three Ruga settlements in each of the three senatorial zones of the state which was to cost the sum of 8.6 billion Naira. This was seen as an initiative to resolve an aspect of banditry which is the clash between herders and farmers in Zamfara state. The governor asserted that 100 hectares of land each have been earmarked for this purpose where schools, clinics, water and grazing reserves will be provided for the herdsmen (Olafusi, 2019).

Additionally, the state government made a robust effort to involve traditional leaders, CSOs, community watch groups and Non-Governmental Organizations in its quest for peaceful resolution of the banditry conflicts in the states. The state has leveraged upon NGOs in acknowledgement and recognition of the roles of critical non-state actors who are stakeholders in the affairs of peacebuilding, intelligence gathering and conflict resolution. It is necessary to note that as of recent times, kinetic efforts by the military has continued against unrepentant bandits who as of now have chosen to continue fighting and occupying the ungoverned spaces of forests and abandoned/desolate rural communities. This kinetic effort is ongoing alongside the non-kinetic efforts of the government. The bridge between the two is that an overwhelming kinetic effort would be expected to cause the bandits to forcefully lay down arms and voluntarily surrender to the state for further non-kinetic procedures which naturally would include disarmament, demobilization and reintegration into the society.

Responses under the Administration of Governor Nasir El-Rufai of Kaduna State

The efforts of the government of Kaduna state at curbing the banditry ravaging the state have been more on the path of kinetic efforts than non-kinetic efforts. It has continued to support the military in its operations against banditry in the state through the provision of financial resources, vehicles as well as other equipment required to enhance the operations. The stakeholders of the operation which are the military, Department of State Security (DSS) and the state vigilante service have remained committed to curbing as well as absorbing run away bandits incusing into Kaduna state.

Prior to this military operation, Kaduna state had an anti-banditry outfit which was a joint patrol conducted along the Kaduna-Birnin Gwari and Kaduna-Abuja highway checkmating the illicit



activities of bandits on the highways which included the menace of robberies, killings and kidnappings for ransom. This joint patrol team, which consists of the military and the Nigerian Police, were forthcoming at containing the menace. However, several limitations which rested on issues of logistics support were a challenge at several points. Unlike Zamfara state where the government is taking the bull of negotiation by the horn and is reaping the dividends of its rightful actions, Kaduna state has remained resolute on kinetic approach as the resolve of the government remains that the government will not negotiate with bandits, hence the menace has remained unabated till date.

Way forward

It is obvious that the resolve of bandits occupying ungoverned spaces in Kaduna and Zamfara states is to continue occupying the spaces and launching their invasions from there. It is also of obvious notice that the enormity of their actions against individuals, communities and the states in terms of various degrees of mayhem is of no concern to them. It could be interpreted therefore that infringing on state security and the much-revered tranquility of communities and environs is their aim and purpose to achieve their intentions. Consequently, the need for the states to develop sustainable strategies necessary to curb these bandits, secure the ungoverned spaces and return the amiable peace to communities and socio-economic activities cannot be overemphasized. Hence, it would be necessary for Kaduna and Zamfara states to:

- a. Synergize together towards curbing a common threat and enemy.
- b. Draw up a common sustainable roadmap or framework towards achieving the curbing of bandits from their ungoverned spaces.
- c. Ensure robust deployment of law enforcement agencies unto appropriate investigations and prosecutions of these bandits.
- d. Appropriately strengthen their judiciaries and prison systems for the dispensing of justice on these bandits.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The presence of bandits and their activities in the ungoverned spaces of Kaduna and Zamfara states has continued to do more harm than good. This is in terms of the mayhem they cause to host villages, communities and towns which they invade from time to time. Their invasion often leads to death, destruction and other ill-fated incidences which has left communities in terror, individuals in trembles and relocation for safety as well as states in distractions of governance. Suffice to state that frantic efforts have been made by both the federal and state governments to curb the menace as well as to keep the ungoverned spaces safe. These efforts ranged from kinetic to non-kinetic means. The kinetic effort has remained with the expectation that it will ripple into non-kinetic outcomes in the distant future.

Given the main findings of the study, this paper recommends that:

The governments of Kaduna and Zamfara states should synergize and draw up a common sustainable roadmap or framework that will aid in eradicating the menace of banditry from their



ungoverned spaces as well as securing it through the deployment of appropriate law enforcement agencies (the Nigerian Police and the NSCDC) and the use of ICT.

The law enforcement agencies especially the Nigerian Police Force should carry out prompt investigations on apprehended bandits and prosecute them accordingly.

The judiciaries and prison systems of these two states should be strengthened appropriately for the dispensing of justice on apprehended bandits.

The two states should establish a rehabilitation centre that would care for victims of banditry including IDPs.

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