

The Nature and Consequences of Armed Banditry in Nigeria: (A Case Study of Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara and Katsina States.

By

Lawal Bello Nahuche

Department of Liberal Studies,
Abdu Gusau Polytechnic Talata Mafara
majidadinmafara2015@gmail.com

Abstract

The study examines the causes and effects of banditry in north western Nigeria with particular emphasis to Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara and Katsina state. Data were chiefly drawn through survey, where in-depth interviews were conducted with the selected border community leaders, police officers and victims of banditry. The paper analyses the descriptive survey using percentages and frequencies, and further transcribed the qualitative data to support the quantitative results. Findings of the study indicate that banditry is a social evil that continue to inflict injury, leads to raping, loss of lives and properties, sustained grief, fear of victimization and anguish among citizenry. These have been attributed to the influx of ex-combatants with fire arms from neighboring war-torn countries, rising unemployment, inadequate and outdated weapons used by the security operatives. The paper recommends the adoption of a state policing, training local vigilante group, providing modern security gadget, and alleviate the incidence of poverty through job creation as a panacea to the perennial security threat in the country.

1.0 Introduction

Nigeria, like any other African country has been experiencing various forms of violent crimes such as ethnic conflicts, rape, armed robbery, assault, murder and kidnapping. A specie of armed robbery that has been of national concern in Nigeria is armed banditry, Nigeria's north- west have been bedeviled by frequent incident of armed banditry. Cattle are being stolen by armed bandits. A gang of bandits taking cover in the forest in this state have been terrorizing the people of the areas. The bandits rob travelers, raid villages and kidnap people. They also demand huge sum of money from the victim's relations.

The mode of operation of the bandits could constitute an obstacle to preventive measures that could have been put in place by the law enforcement agents. This is because bandits engaged in one-time raids and follow a 'slash and burn' form of appropriation. The nature and pattern of armed banditry in contemporary Nigeria has become so pervasive that only a few Nigerians that travel or live within the border communities can claim not to have suffered its impact. The phenomenon could take various forms in various places which may include waylaying victims on the highways and on transit points, storming and sacking of whole villages, stealing hundreds of cattle. Losses could range from monetary, material and valuables livestock and above all human resources.

The incident of armed banditry in Nigeria has developed new dimension from the traditional to modern. It is the understanding of this new dimension or tendencies and their relative's importance that should be the point of focus. It is in view of the above circumstances regarding the phenomenon in the North-West that this proposal seeks to examine the courses nature and the consequences of armed banditry in those states. It also intends to examine the socio-demographic attributes of suspected perpetrators and the identified victims of such acts of banditry with a view to proffering useful recommendations. Thus, the proposal sought to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the causes, nature and pattern of armed banditry in the North-Western states of Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara and Katsina?
2. Who are these bandits and who are their victims?
3. How regularly does armed banditry occur in these states?
4. To what extent the incident of armed banditry constitutes a problem to individual victims, and the government?
5. What is the role played by individual, communities and government law enforcement agents in addressing the menace?

1.1 The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To find out the causes, natures, pattern of armed banditry and armed bandits in North-Western states of Sokoto, kebbi, Zamfara and Katsina in Nigeria.
2. To the determine the socio-demographic attributes of identified perpetrators and victims of armed banditry in communities of Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara and Katsina states of North-West zone in Nigeria.
3. To determine the impact of armed banditry on the individual victims and the affected states.
4. To identify and asses the efforts put in place by individual, communities and government law enforcement agencies towards addressing the menace in the areas affected.
5. To make recommendations towards effective prevention and control of the crime

A critical review of relevant theories that have the potential of explaining the research problem in a bid to identifying suitable models that could satisfactorily address the problem of armed banditry and its attendant consequences on the communities of selected north western states of Nigeria that comprises Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara and Katsina. The direct roof cause of armed incursion into Nigeria could be found in the political insurgency which erupted in Chad and later in Niger in the previous decade.

During this period, rebels converted the island on the lake Chad to their base from where they launched guerilla attack against Chadian. (Bobbo, 1999:19)

Danbazau (1999-78) however argues that “there is no isolated single cause of crime or criminal behaviors. Explanation of crime will largely depend on multiple causes. It is also mostly the case that the environment plays a major role in addition to other factors that may be peculiar to the individual criminal.” Hinjaru (1993:152) noted that the “exclusive nature of nation state boundary is contradicted by the necessary of daily life. Depending human right report (2002:2) observed that “rising poverty, unemployment and breakdown of traditional social structures have led to an upsurge of violent crime in recent years which the Nigerian police have been ill-equipped to address.

The report further stated that, crime rates and proliferation of crime have been exacerbated by the high proliferation of small arms throughout the country”. Agbotan, Johnson et al (2003:31). Acts of armed banditry has been perceived by different societies in different ways. In his study of the horn of Africa, Mburu (1999:100) observed that banditry had transmitted 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. Crumney (1999) argued that, banditry was indeed a significant African phenomenon embedded in rural societies, and that bandits are recognized as such by rural dwellers.

Osanba (1998:18) noted that raiding had evolved into military operations using conventional war tactics and involving thousands of livestock. Not only young men were killed, but women and children were brutally murdered as well, huts stores and harvest were set on fire and shops, locket. In his study of armed banditry in Borgu, Akinwumi (1994:7) noted that, in pre-colonial Borgu in kwara state, Nigeria “bakinjaki”, one of the notorious raiders in the nineteenth century, had a gang made up of about 400 robbers on foot and 60 horsemen. When they attacked, they did so to loot the traders of their goods. They even captured traders who they later sold in to slavery. This affected the main source of Borgu's economy and consequently led to the fall of many of the Borgu pre-colonial states. A report by the International Institute of the Democracy and the Electoral Assistance (IIDEA 2001:196) stated that in Cameroon security report issue in 2000 listed 84 members of the police, gendarmerie, and army involved in cases of armed banditry that were subsequently prosecuted. Some police men in Ghana collaborated with robbers by lending them their weapons and closing enabling what are often referred to as “POBBERS” (police-robbers).

Several Nigerian soldiers and political officer have been sentenced to death for armed Robbery, but more shocking is the role of politicians in arms proliferation armed crime. Nkpa (1994:271) further noted that sex is a determining factor in crime affecting not only the violation of law but also the nature of crime.

Otu (2003) also notes that, with such violent crimes as armed banditry, “the perpetrators usually mainly males, predominantly of the ages the active members of the working population, mainly those from the lower class “income”. Furthermore, the offence and offender are also violent in nature”. According to Muggah and Batchelor (2002:32) “armed banditry can severally 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. Where these often happen repeatedly, social investment often, declines with broad ripple effects on both foreign investment confidence and overseas development assistance.

Ginifer and Ismail (2005:60) also noted that the threat and actual use of violence by armed groups, vigilantes and robbers has led to communities retreating into themselves and often has stimulated the growth of private security services for those who can afford them) and vigilante “protection” for the poor. The method and techniques to be adopted in the collection and analysis of data relating to the phenomenon of armed banditry are quantitative and qualitative techniques.

2.0 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population of this study will be divided into three categories, the first category considered of selected adults of the selected communities of Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara and Katsina, while the second category would consist of community, vigilante and opinion leaders who have lived in the research areas for at least fifteen years and had direct links to issue of armed banditry either as security agents or prominent indigenes of the communities of the states. The third category will consist of persons who have been victims of incidents of armed banditry. Data from the first category will be collected through survey questionnaire, while data from the second and third categories would be obtained in-depth interviews. Sampling procedures regarding the selection of the respondents of this research will vary according to the requirement of the particular data collection technique for which the sample is being drawn.

3.1 Result Analysis

The quantitative method of data analysis would be used simultaneously and in compliment with the qualitative method in order to gain access into the inner recess of the community life. The interpretation of data is carried out. The data were analyzed using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS). The data were generated from survey and in-depth interviews. During the in-depth interviews, key informants were asked to respond freely to the questions carried in the in-depth interview guide and other issues which they wanted the researcher to know. The qualitative data were grouped, sorted out, analyzed and presented descriptively using frequencies and percentages. The results from the survey were complimented by the qualitative data from the in-depth interview.

3.2 Causes of Armed Banditry

The presentation and interpretation of survey data were complemented by response from key informants who were direct victims of armed banditry, community leaders who may have received reports of incidents of armed banditry, police officers who were involved with issues of security and prominent indigenes of the communities. Armed banditry has been linked to several causes among which are; displacement due to wars. In Nigeria's bordering countries, lack of basic amenities, unemployment among youths, moral decadence among the youths and other members of the affected communities. Table below presents survey respondents' view of the causes of armed banditry.

TABLE 4.2.1: RESPONDENTS PERCEPTION OF THE CAUSES OF ARMED BANDITRY

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S/N	Causes of Armed Banditry	Strongly Agree		Agreed		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Total	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1.	Displacement due to civil wars in Neighboring countries	184	73.6	41	16.4	7	2.8	18	7.2	250	100
2.	Displacement due to natural disasters e.g. draught, floods etc.	17	6.8	76	30.4	24	9.6	133	53.2	250	100
3.	Lack of basic amenities	59	23.6	151	60.4	11	4.4	29	11.6	250	100
4.	Growing unemployment among youths	226	90.4	15	6.0	6	2.4	3	1.2	250	100
5.	Moral decadence	192	76.8	48	19.2	-	-	10	4.0	250	100
6.	Farmers/Fulani herdsmen clashes	10	4.0	28	11.2	19	7.6	193	77.2	250	100
7.	Harsh economic Environment	207	82.0	18	7.2	5	2.0	7	2.8	250	100
8.	Ready availability of Snail and light weapons	220	88.0	18	7.2	5	2.0	7	2.8	250	100

SOURCE:(Fieldwork2021)

The aforementioned factors largely contributed for the state of armed banditry in the study area. The percentages of the respondents who think that the factors in question contribute to people's involvement in armed banditry. The causes of armed banditry in communities of Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara and Katsina states were found to be linked to such factors as moral decadence, unemployment among youths, availability of small and light weapons, Displacement due to civil wars in Nigeria's border neighboring countries. On the nature and pattern of armed banditry it was found that the armed bandits attack people on the highways, dispossessing people of their money then escaping on foot to the bush. The bandits are usually very violent and even kill their victims. The socio-demographic attributes of the bandits reveal that they are mostly males, between the ages of 18 and 35 years. On the impact of armed banditry on socio-economic life of the victims and the community in general, it was found out that the impact was diverse and include disruption of farming and commercial activities, Psychological trauma suffered by victims and relatives of the victims of armed banditry, disruption of social activities such as school attendance and festivals.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study found out that security agencies have failed to provide lasting solution to the menace of banditry in the north western region in particular and Nigeria in general.

This is a pointer that government has failed to protect life and property, a scenario that potentially lead to social unrest and worsens the security threats. In the light of the above therefore, the paper recommends the Adoption of a state policing, providing security agencies with appropriate weapons and alleviate the incidence of poverty through job creation.

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