BANDITRY IN NIGERIA’S NORTHWEST: A REFLECTIVE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The menace of crime around the globe has raised the question of what underscores security. It draws attention to how criminals and their activities can be nipped in the bud. The concurrence of banditry activities in Nigeria’s northwest region remains a ready case for discussion, giving the escalation in the number of cases of cattle rustling, kidnapping and other dreadful incidences affecting the residents of the region. The qualitative methodology was employed in the conduct of the research. The researcher paid a keen attention to the different forms of crimes around the above location and how best to keep it under check. It was observed that the region is volatile with the presence of an array of criminal elements who have overtime posed a humongous threat to the region, and the sovereignty of the Nigerian state as a whole. It was however, opined that, for peace and tranquility to return to the Northwest region of Nigeria currently bedeviled by nefarious activities of bandits, stakeholders at all levels must own the troubles by consciously agreeing to stamp out all enemies of peace. Furthermore, the paper recommended that the government should apply judicial jurisprudence in the prosecution of suspects arrested according to extant laws.

Keywords: Banditry, Crime, Nigeria’s northwest

Introduction

Crimes thrive within all human societies especially when left unchecked by concerned stakeholders for a long time. The recurrence of myriads of crimes within the globe raises concerns for real protection of lives and property which is the core duty of all sovereign governments or states. The menace of crime around the globe has raised the question of what truly underscores security as the number of incidences keeps rising daily. According to Ifeanyi Onwuzuruigbo (2020), Cattle rustling in the northern Nigeria, is carried out with a hybrid and complicated impetus by criminal elements marauding in a somewhat prevalent manner. To him, this is as a result of the government not being able to govern

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assertively or due to lack of interest to tackle the issue of ungoverned spaces which serve as breeding grounds for these miscreants.

Baba Othman Ngelzarma stated that “the attackers in Nigeria’s northwest were foreign herders from neighboring countries”. Kidnapping for ransom is widespread in Nigeria, victims are forced to pay between $20, and $200,000 to regain their freedom. Abba Kyari head of the police anti kidnapping unit, stated that “at its height in 2017 and 2018, the major state road connecting the capital Abuja in central Nigeria to Kaduna in the northwest had 10 kidnappings per day with 20 different groups operating on the route.” The above claim is reinforced by the sophistication and systematic methods of operations usually adopted by these criminal elements that have often left scores of people dead. While it is true that the ungoverned spaces contribute immensely to the prevalent incessant crime rate in the Nigeria’s northwest among which is cattle rustling, it will be narrow minded to pitch with the idea that ungoverned spaces is the major cause of crime and criminality in the region understudy. Rather, in addition to the risk of ungoverned spaces, it may equally be as a result of frustrations caused by governmental denials, deprivations, outright neglect or even a calculated rational choice to a get-rich-quick syndrome by the perpetrators. But whichever line of argument one prefers to toe, the core issue still lays with the interest of the government to pursue its fundamental obligation to the people that is safety and protection from all forms of threat.

According to Egwu (2016) banditry exists when it is seen as a means of ‘primitive’ accumulation of several cow heads in the understanding pertaining to subsistence and commercial pastoralism. In the process of criminals perpetrating rural banditry, they also rape, organize attacks on villages and communities, kidnapping and looting. Furthermore, Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016) argued that banditry thrives within a ‘social ecology’ of the rural sector that is characterized by gross governance deficits. Jaafar (2018:2) argued that there were recorded instances of rural banditry in the colonial era of Nigeria as far back as the 1930”.

…In those days, wayfarers and merchants travelling along our local economic roads usually face 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, Camels, and ox carts. Those bandits on our trade routes would forcefully take those goods and disappear into the bush. That is just one dimension of the problem then. In other instances, the bandits will sometimes raid farming communities and
villages with the intent of willful killing and wanton destruction of property. During such raids, the bandits would virtually destroy everything in their path, including valuables, farm produce, etc. This subculture has been in existence even before the coming of the colonialists to the territory of northern Nigeria.

Concerning banditry in northwestern Nigeria, The New Humanitarian (formerly IRIN News, 2018:8-9) argued that the region “has a long history of banditry. The first recorded case of banditry was between “western Hausa land” and the Niger border in 1901, when a twelve thousand strong Camel train “laden with assorted grains” was attacked and two-hundred and ten merchants were killed” Bagu and Smith (2017:5) argued that:

Gangs of criminals, often youth from farming and herding communities and/or local bandits, take advantage of growing insecurity, fear and cyclical attacks to loot villages, engage in highway ruberry, and rustle cattle for personal gain. Both farming and herding communities suffer from this criminality.

Recent cases of banditry in Nigeria reveal a pathetic humanitarian challenge. According (CDD,2015a:2) the bandits “have been robbing people on highways, rustling cattle, laying siege on rural markets, looting and killing innocent people”. This prevailing pattern of criminality is one of the leading triggers of violence in Nigeria (Azad Crawford and Kaila, 2018) it is pertinent to state that some existing works on banditry are perceived as farmer herder conflict (Salangwa,2013; Gambari; 2018; Bashir, 2018; Amadu, 2019) Thus, bandits are a group of criminal elements who seek to deprive or disposes legitimate owners of their properties (valuables) and in resistant situations vandalize, inflict different degrees of injuries or even kill (victims), it then follows to assert that banditry increases threat to lives and property of citizens in the northwest region of the Nigerian nation and the recurring pattern will naturally scare business owners and settlers from investing or expanding their business as a result of fear of the unknown.

As evident in extant literature, the menace of banditry has extensively received critical attention in its different dimensions from scholars in their bid to proffer possible solutions. In the same vein this paper is aimed at addressing the question of age long threat of banditry in North-West Nigeria. To achieve this aim, the paper draws from incipient studies and various secondary sources. This was qualitatively analyzed using descriptive style. Thus, following the introduction, the work is divided into six sections.
The first presents an overview of Nigeria’s North-West geopolitical zone. The second explores the key concepts utilized in the work. The third section presents the frameworks used in anchoring the discussion on banditry. The fourth section interrogates the effects of banditry in the North-West. While the fifth section explains government interventions and attempts to address the question of banditry, the sixth section offers the conclusion.

**An Overview of Nigeria’s Northwest**
The geographical space currently referred to as northwest Nigeria occupies a strategic position in the economic, political, social and other developmental consideration in the sovereignty called Nigeria. The natives of this geographical location are predominantly farmers located in a somewhat forest region of northern Nigeria. Their rich agricultural heritage; that is rearing of cattle and other produces for economic survival, which in turn brings social prosperity has remained a motivating factor for criminal elements involved in banditry to conceive their locality as a safe haven bearing in mind that there is little or no assertive security network to checkmate their brigandage.

In recent times, Nigeria's northwest region has become synonymous with carnage and all other crimes against humanity. By political stratification, it is one of the six geo-political zones of Nigeria regrettably bedeviled by ghastly violence of varying degrees. According to John Campbell and Jack McCaslin (2020) the Nigeria’s northwest comprises seven states: Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara. In one of such a slew of attacks on May 30 and 31 2020 saw the killing of eighteen villages and the carting away of thousands of livestock mostly cattle. The incessant attacks by cattle rustlers have dominated the region under review for several years and are still counting.

According to Samaila Suleiman (2019) between January and April 2019 the Nigeria Army instituted a number of anti-banditry operations to quell the activities of the miscreants, among these are Operation Harbin Kunama, Operation Diran Mikiya, and Operation Puff Adder. Basically, the various military Operations were worse in Zamfara State, in a separate report, the Zamfara State government was quoted to have spent 17 billion naira in combating banditry and other criminalities. The foregoing source evidently underscores the fact that bandits spread from Zamfara State into other neighbouring northwestern States of Nigeria.

**Conceptual Framework**
This section covers all the core concepts used in this work, their meanings, usage and implication for the region under study. This is necessitated by the need to check the
positions of scholars as posited in extant literature and the filtering off of any form of ambiguity.

**Concept of Crime**
The term crime may range from simple to very complex criminal perpetrations by individuals or groups of persons for either self-aggrandizement or as a source of income. Crime is an act that the law makes punishable; the breach of a legal duty treated as the subject-matter of a criminal proceeding. For whatever reason a criminal chooses to get entangled in the outlawed trade and unpopular behaviour, it is obvious that such reasons cannot justify the social vices. According to the authors of handbook on crime prevention (2010), every nation across the world struggle to ensure the safety of their citizens and an increase in their quality of lives. This reaffirms the core justification for the existence of the modern state structure and governance. Suffice to say that crime prevention cum security or protection of lives and property of the citizenry of any sovereign nation is a fundamental need that cannot be shelved for other responsibilities. In a bid to capture the negative effects of crime, the above authors listed an array of possible implications of criminality to include: sexual abuse, physical brutality, untimely death, racial discrimination and or victimization to mention but a few. Of course, these ills will not allow the fulfillment of a good life for individual citizens nor will it guarantee an increase in quality of life as may have been intended by such peoples of a nation or region.

Okoli and Ugwu (2019), in their work were apt to posit that “Nigeria is, arguably, a country under distress”...due to the spat of deadly violence like kidnapping, armed robbery, banditry, terrorism and other forms of social ills. These outlined criminal activities are perpetuated by crime prone individuals who unleash bloody violence on the civilians from time to time. But since these miscreants engage the use of weapons in their activities, the question of how they get arms supply should be a source of concern to the government. Extant literature suggests that there exists an arms network which sustains the conduct of banditry around the northwestern region of Nigeria. Mkutu (2007); Verweijen & Brabant (2017), argued that “proliferation of small and light weapons flow into various sites or violent prone locations from the porous national borders”. One should then think that once the supply chain of arms is starved or totally cutoff the crime of banditry will naturally suffocate. Ironically, the cutoff of sources of arms may not extinct crime because the act itself is informed by a set of complex patterns ranging from societal composition(domestic) international influence (external), state structures, economic, eroded value system and egoistic show of Maoism etc.
While it is a known fact that some initial local militias criminal groups are gaining international collaboration and gradually changing their scale and standards of operations as a result of funding and technical supports accessible to them from their xyz collaborators, the composition of the local society may have as well contributed to the rising level in the act of banditry via what is allowed by communities in terms of values, customs, traditions and their general way of life. On the other hand, the prevalence of economic hardship informed/occasioned by recession, loss of jobs, low and or no access to education, equally contribute to the growing level of violence. In other cases, the gullible nature of some individuals push them into crime just to prove to their contemporaries that they could equally do seemingly great feats to achieve recognition or possess a trending property.

In whatever form or shape crime is showcased by criminal elements, there is need to have a clear roadmap as to what should be done to audit happenings within a region such as Nigeria's northwest and a collaborative scheme to reduce or total stamping out of the criminals and the effects of their illicit acts.

**The Concept of Banditry**

Banditry is an issue of global concern. It is occurring in most of the crisis ridden African states within the Sahel and Sahara (Fat-Gaiba-ga, 2016; Gaya, 2018a and b). There are reported cases of banditry, even beyond African Countries. Banditry, according to (Callen, Gulzar, Rezaee and Sharpiro, 2018:1) also occurred in Latain-America, but it is viewed as a drug-war. Banditry prevailed also in the Far East which is seen as a burdensome criminality frontier. Rural banditry is also a challenge in the agricultural or agrarian belt in Sweden (FAO, 2009).

Whereas bandits and banditry may not be a new concept or terminology, its recurrence and prevalent resilience in Nigeria in general and the northwest region call for concern among critical stakeholders.

With the current devastation sweeping through the northwest region of Nigeria and the somewhat silence by the critical stakeholders who should have assertively stamped out the menace of banditry from its roots, one may begin to ask if the social contract voluntarily entered with the leviathan to avert the state-of-nature experience truly extended to Nigeria and to the north west geopolitical zone in particular giving the massacres of southern Kaduna, the burning of villages in Zamfara and the humongous carnage read on the pages of the various medias on daily basis.

Banditry as replicated in kidnapping, armed robbery, sexual abuse, maiming, vandalism, murder, cattle rustling and all other terrorist acts meted on the peoples of the northwest calls for questioning regarding the sovereignty of the Nigerian state, because we are
gradually re-baptized into the very reasons for which humans in the state of nature submitted their rights to the leviathan. According to the Handbook on crime...to nip crime in the bud demand a change in the techniques employed by government, organizations and institutions. By extension, while the Nigeria nation and her institutions may not have been silent as earlier assumed, they may have equally clinched to moribund ideas and strategies incapable of a cure to the symptoms of banditry and other criminalities which are now profitable enterprise against all known extant legal jurisprudence available within the Nigerian state. Furthermore, to say that the very many banditry incidences may have overwhelmed the government of Nigeria and its intelligence network, therefore, there is the need to revamp and evolve incremental strategies, by seeking technical support and collaborations with other nations and critical stakeholders to decimate the criminal elements out of Nigeria.

Concept of Cattle Rustling

According to Duncan and Gumba (2020) cattle rustling has taken the dimension of organized crime, beyond the earlier notion of a local or cultural event. To further underscore his point he asserted that: “Traditionally, small-scale stock theft was a way of balancing community wealth and power. He continued by linking the current outburst of cattle rustling as a form of crime fueled by capitalist orientation and practices that has significant effect on security and all spheres of human life in Kenya and South Sudan.”

This trend of thought suggests that Cattle rustling are a kind of banditry as deadly as terrorism. In real terms cattle rustling is the act of stealing cattle from its original owner by an armed band of criminals. Following the happenings in the Nigeria’s northeast in our recent history, one may be forced to assume that what is referred to as banditry is nothing but a form of new terrorism unchecked by the government or a change in nomenclature calculated to reduce the fears of the general public by making them believe that the activities of the new criminal elements are less harmful from those of the Boko Haram insurgents. Notwithstanding the foregoing psychology, it has become crystal clear to most analytical minds that the activities of the bandits in the northwest region of Nigeria is systematically calculated, locations are carefully targeted, and sophisticated arms are employed in the execution of the planned cause of actions. According to Onwuzuruigbo (2020) Cattle rustlers are armed criminals operating in groups for the purpose of thieving cattle. To reinforce this opinion the series of carnage recorded as herdsmen/farmers clashes has left thousands dead and still counting without a conclusive boldness shown by the government to rest the losses of lives, farmlands, displacement of
communities and the burning of their villages. The question could be asked is this a conspiracy of silence to meet a strategic goal?

In their argument Okoli and Ugwu (2019), posited a catalogue of types of banditry and their different forms based on location, motive, and affinity with agencies, formation and their operational modes. A keen analysis of the table revealed that the various typologies of banditry are a clear indication that this form of criminality is predetermined and sophisticated as terrorism and should be faced with equal firepower or more attention as has been the case of Boko Haram.

**Table 1: A Typology of Banditry**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Typology index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social vs. political vs. economic</td>
<td>Intent or motive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural vs. urban</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercenary vs. autonomous</td>
<td>Agency and autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized vs. petty</td>
<td>Form and formation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roving vs. stationary</td>
<td>Operational mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontier vs. countryside</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maritime vs. coastal vs. mainland</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Okoli and Ugwu (2019)

The thrust of this study is to expose the nature of the hotbed otherwise called the northwest, evaluate government efforts and recommend solutions.

**Theoretical Framework**

This section of the work adopts the use of routine activities theory and theory of ungoverned space in explaining the possible causes of the menace of crime cum banditries and the fundamental place of the government in proffering security solutions to the everyday, social vices as may arise.

The Routine Activities Theory (RAT) was advanced by Cohen and Felson (1979) in a bid to create insight into the patterns and trends of predatory criminality and their events in a historical perspective in the phase of changing economic realities. The theorist posited that crime and criminalities are most likely to take place where there is convergence of three basic variables namely, a motivated or intended actor, an attractive target, and the absence of capable guardianship.
Basic Assumptions of Routine Activities Theory

Likely offender this refers to an individual with criminal tendencies who awaits the chance or opportunity to execute his criminal intentions.

Since all criminal acts must have a suitable target whose life or property have been subjected to risk, a suitable target according to the routine activities theory refers to a situation in which a criminal element becomes attracted to a valuable which he or she wishes to illegally convert to personal use or benefit. However, such intentions and acts are usually motivated by the possible guarantee of an escape route from the scene of crime unhurt.

Absence of a capable guardian against offense whereas there will always be a criminal intent and a possible target to be ripped of his/her the inability of the government to provide adequate security for its citizenry translates into a free for all situation for criminalities to thrive. Just as in our case, the inability of the Nigerian government to aggressively pursue the security and safety of the populace in Nigeria's northwest has left the region under policed and consequently a recurring carnage and loss of properties.

The relevance of this theory to the current work lies in its ability to x-ray the complexity of crime and proffer a simplified view for analysts to work with. Suffice to assert that the demystification of crime as indicated above has one major story to tell and that is that the inability of the Nigeria government to provide sustainable security infrastructure within the belt under study has resulted in the feeling of total control by the hoodlums. This means that conscious pursuance of security of the territorial areas called northwestern Nigeria will reduce if not eradicate the nefarious activities of bandits.

Bandits liaise with some gullible members of the communities to get information towards targets. The bandits then reward such informants with large amounts of money. The bandits acquire their arms and ammunition through neighbouring countries such as Chad and Niger republic. In rare occasions, members of the communities do take revenge on identified informants of the bandits and the bandit will inturn embark on reprisal killing of their informants.

The Theory of Ungoverned Space

This is an assumption which tends to give a keen insight into the menace of banditry and other criminalities within the violent prone axis of any sovereign state, with particular reference to the Nigerian state and its northwest region, be it physical or otherwise. As x-rayed herein, researchers argue that the assertive presence of government within a
geopolitical location creates a feeling or safe haven for criminal elements to breed militia
groups who would pose threat to the sovereignty of an independent state.

According to Raleigh, C. et al. (2013) the concept of ungoverned space is deeply rooted
in state failure to have a legitimate grip of its territories, either by a conscious motive to
deprive a region of the good of governance. These scholars further argued that… “the
groups operating within the Sahel are, by and large, domestic groups operating within
their own subnational contexts, and challenging local, regional and national governance
over issues of corruption, marginalization, political exclusion and mismanagement”.
Suffice to say that the failure triggers instability within a region where government
presence is limited, this argument may then mean that people are either stimulated into
crime as a result of a physical absence of government or as a response to the negligence
of government to provide sustainable development within an area within its sovereignty.
To corroborate the foregoing, Boone (2003) vehemently argued that governments across
the West African regions relate with territories based on their economic relevance and
the core interest of the incumbent.

In a nutshell, the theory of ungoverned space is an analytical framework which creates
an insight into the implications of government’s absences within its territorial sovereignty
for any reason.
To this end, these theories are relevant and analytical enough in explaining the dark cloud
called crime and criminality within the northwestern region of Nigeria.

Effects of Banditry in the Northwest Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria
Since there are reactions and implications for all human actions, the banditries daily
witnessed by the natives of the northwest region of Nigeria have implications for the
inhabitants of the region. According to UNHCR, (2020) over 309,000 people have been
displaced by the northwest banditry crisis as at 20th June 2020. A breakdown of the IDPs
shows that Zamfara State accommodates about 69,000 IDPs, Kaduna 71,000, Katsina
61,000, Sokoto 45,000, and Niger 3,000 which implies that Kaduna State is the heights
hit by the current wave of banditry and other forms of criminalities within the region. As
a result of the rapid displacement occasioned by nefarious activities of the bandits in the
aforementioned States, the people’s livelihood has been disrupted and in other cases high
level carnage recorded under an atmosphere of hostilities and uncertainty for self-
actualization. Consequently, in a bid to survive, displaced persons have taken to begging
on the streets, as well as engaging in menial jobs to be alive.
The core effects of banditries on the populace domicile in the NWN are issues of fear of the unknown. Being that security is perceived as a state which guarantees freedom from fear and any situation that threatens actualization of good life, the recurrence of violence in the above region leaves the citizens at the verge of uncertainty (Egwu, 2016). Second is loss of valuable sources of livelihood, the loss of farmlands and produce to banditry pose immense threat to the rural settlers who in most cases are left with little or nothing as a result of theft of their valuables by bandits. Hence, the absence of these critical needs as occasioned by theft or destruction of such means of livelihood by criminal elements end up making life unbearable if not miserable for the northwestern regions. This may in turn create a determination to get into crime or a total escape out of the region in search of safety. Where the individual insists on surviving at all cost within the region, they may commence theft of other people’s belongings and where they decide to quit the region life is commenced afresh under uncertainty and fear.

Third, is the eroding of the economic base: as a result of destruction of farmlands, carnages of different degrees, rape, armed robbery, kidnapping and other related ills, the economic activities has decreased drastically. CDD (2015) While it is now difficult to cultivate farmlands and subsequently sell the produce, the prospective buyers or business partners have naturally alienated themselves from the region, thereby increasing hardship witnessed by both sellers and the prospective buyers. Considering the value-chain of the economic line, the effects of the current crisis affects the farmer, the milling factories, the buyers, the transportation line, government revenue, usual consumer of the various products in terms of drought in the supply chain and therefore a very high cost where available.

Badamasi et.al, (2018) argued that the Kaduna/Abuja highway which is a critical road link to several northwest states, including the federal capital territory Abuja is under concurrent attacks, to these scholars, the indiscriminate kidnapping, and armed robbery among other crimes have accounted for why travelers have deserted the highway for the fear of the activities of bandits who randomly abduct, kidnap, maim and outright killing of innocent travelers along the route. Suffice to posit that travelers within the northwest region has been frustrated by the recurring dilemma within the land-routes and in response sort alternative travel modes such as air and rail.

Badamasi, et al, (2018), while addressing the effect of banditry and other criminal practices on the security infrastructure argued that the long time silence of the government in nipping in the bud the various violent conflicts have granted boldness to
criminality. Hence, this has further encouraged the youth in the area to be engaged in criminal activities such as kidnapping, abduction and killing of innocent citizens. By implication, these menace has increased the complexity of community policing. Using the foregoing conditionality as the core variables to understudy the effect of the bloodsucking criminal elements in the Nigeria’s northwest region, it has become crystal clear that while the events may be localized in region, the effects are felt by the lager Nigerian state in terms of food supply value chain, loss of human capital, bad image before the international community etc.

**Government Efforts to Curb Banditry in the Nigeria’s Northwest**

The bandits operating in the northwest will come to town and spray bullets, lill indiscriminately for no purpose whatsoever. In an attempt to resolve the crisis, the Governor of katsina State, Aminu Bello Masari, went into the forest hideout of the bandit in 2019, negotiated a deal that would see them escape prosecution in exchange for stopping the attacks. In August 2020, Mr. Masari regretted the peace deal was no more due to the continuous attacks. On December 11, 2020 armed men attacked Government science secondary school for boys in Kankara (katsina state, northwest nigeria) and over 300 students were rescued the following week. However, the Katsina state Government said that the students were released as a result of the onslaught against the bandits by the military. President Muhammed Buhari approved a joint military and police operation specifically targeted at combing Niger, Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto states to read the states with the assurance that surveillance would be improved with more night vision aircrafts already deployed under “Operation Accord”.

The most recent military effort to deal with the violence in the northwest is operation Sahel Sanity. The executive governor of Niger state, Abubarkar Sani Bello, urged the Nigerian Airforce to establish an airstrip to bombard the bandits through airpower by the Nigerian Airforce. There is an increase in security personnel on the kaduna-abuja highway. Constant patrol of the highway by the police and Nigerian Airforce to deal with kidnapping and banditry. Regular patrol and surveillance will keep kidnappers and other criminals away. The deployment of special forces by the Nigerian police will no doubt reduce the rate of kidnapping and banditry in Nigeria northwest.

Banditry here ranges from cattle rustling, invasion of mining sites to steal natural resources, armed robberies, herdsmen attacks among other criminalities. Like every other social ill, the government of Nigeria has in the preceding years responded to the activities of bandits in the northwest geo-political zone, Bashir, et al (2018). The question of
whether such advances are potent enough to stamp out the menace remains the critical point to argue.

The general notion indicated that the government has in reaction to the menace of banditry in the north west geopolitical employed the services of military and police under different code names in a bid to curb the criminality, but rather than stamping it out, the results have been of mixed feelings. According to handbook on crime prevention (2020) there are a couple of unavoidable responsibilities or steps for governments to take in the face of widespread criminalities as currently witnessed in our area of research, to them it includes:

A permanent central authority: being that the security of all within sovereignty is the fundamental responsibility of the government it is critical and urgent for the government via the armed forces to assert a perpetual central security authority to administer the region. The term permanent is inevitable because other than a firm and proactive security network what has been witnessed in the recent history of crime policing around the region has been a reactive measure which comes is a repeated circle i.e. crime dominance-inspection of the affected areas-few arrests of suspects-setting up of panels-reports-conciliatory committees-stakeholders meeting and few days security presences. This circle has remained without positive and long lasting solutions and the same process for all cases. It is therefore suggested that the government must be conscious about creating a process blind to vested interests.

A crime prevention plan with clear priorities and targets: this refers to a conscious and well-tailored procedure intended to be adopted for the curtailing of criminal activities. This implies proactively introducing a workable machinery to deter the possible occurrence of banditries in northwestern Nigeria and other security risk zones.

Coordination and partnerships between government agencies and civil society: while it may be difficult for the government alone, the authors of the handbook of crime prevention (20) recommends a collaboration between government and specialized civil societies and any institution that may help in the fight against criminalities.

Public education and work with the media: government was advised to adopt education as a toll to enlighten the populace of the region on the ills of banditry on their collective and individual lives and livelihood.

Sustainability and accountability of programmes: all points above should be sustained by successive governments irrespective of their flagship for the purpose of maintaining the
-tempo. Equally, accountability and transparency must be adopted as watchwords to reduce distrust
Training and capacity-building for government and other bodies: training and retraining for all stakeholders is advocated to ensure that the skills learnt over time are audited for better service delivery.

Resolving the Impacts of Banditry in Northwestern Nigeria
The discourse of banditry within the Nigeria northwest region has remained a core security factor that requires urgent attention due to its fragility and impact on the rural settlers and the nation at large. Thus, for sustainable security within the NW region of Nigeria, the national security infrastructure should aim at community policing for prompt information shearing among the security agencies and concerned government structures. That is, security forces should float a united frontier to sponge for critical information to aid swift foiling of criminal attempts of bandits.

Conclusion
This paper has shown that the current level of criminality in and around the northwest geopolitical zone is as a result of the silence by critical stakeholders over a long period of time. It equally exposed the nature and activities of the criminal elements whose conducts have altered the peaceful atmosphere formerly enjoyed by the agrarian settlers of the northwest region of Nigeria. With Zamfara and Kaduna bearing the worst brunt of banditry and other criminal activities within the region understudy, there is a clear indication that the government and its other critical stakeholders must take a decisive bold step in stamping out banditries in their various forms. Furthermore, it was suggested that the lapses situated within the security infrastructure has made the policing of the large expanse of land almost ungovernable, hence, the government has the responsibility of refining the whole security infrastructure to curb banditry in the northwestern states of Nigeria. Having established ungoverned spaces as a fundamental issue within the region, we advise that the government should concurrently take conscious audit of the geographical area from time to time to ensure that the security architecture put in place are actually doing their bid to curb the menace of banditry. Finally, the government and all stakeholders should ensure that the constitutional provisions for violations of all rights and threats to fulfillment of the individual citizens are vigorously pursued via the legal jurisprudence which guides human interactions within the sovereignty.
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