

TERRORISM AND BANDITRY IN NIGERIA: THE NEXUS

Kaduna, Katsina, Niger and Zamfara States
Context





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ACRONYMS

CBOs: Community Based Organisations

CSOs: Civil Society Organisations

ECOWAS: Economic Community for West African States

EU: European Union

FCDO: Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

GIZ: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

GJF: Goodluck Jonathan Foundation

ISGS: Islamic State in the Greater Sahara

ISWAP: Islamic State in West Africa Province

JNIM: Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimin

USAID: United States Aid for International Development

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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GJF would also like to acknowledge Dr Oluwole Ojewale for leading the research effort and Dr Chris Kwaja for his feedback and inputs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details the findings of the research study that examined the plausibility between terrorism and banditry towards shedding new light on the dynamics of the country's security challenges especially in northwest and northcentral Nigeria, within the focal context of Kaduna, Katsina, Niger and Zamfara States.

Nigeria faces a plethora of security challenges ranging from the Boko Haram religious/violent extremism cum insurgency in the northeast to farmer-herder conflict and banditry in the northcentral and northeast, a revived secessionist movement in the southeast, police repression, piracy, and more recently attacks

the nexus between banditry and terrorism; highlight the strategies and actions required by various stakeholders at various levels to counter the spread of banditry and terrorism in these focal states.

Predominantly, the report utilises both qualitative and descriptive methods, generated from primary and secondary data gotten through desk review, and a consolidation of findings with feedback from consultations with stakeholders in selected focal states. The report undertook qualitative research in the focal states, documenting the experiences of some critical stakeholders through key

The report finds that while banditry gravely endangers public safety and security in the focal states, there are contextual differences in the origin, evolution, and manifestations of banditry in the focal states.

on security installations, among others. In spite of government efforts, the security situation in Nigeria is deteriorating. The report thus explores the question of whether banditry and terrorism are the alternate side of the same coin and the security and policy implications of conflating both.

The purpose of this report is to ascertain

informant interviews. These interviews were cluster-based to provide a better context to the literature and systemically present the experiences of stakeholders.

The report finds that while banditry gravely endangers public safety and security in the focal states, there are contextual differences in the origin, evolution, and manifestations

of banditry in the focal states. Understanding these local variations is important to deploying effective and sustainable solutions to this spectre of banditry that defines governance in the states.

The report also notes that there is no discernible ideological persuasion underpinning banditry beyond theft, extortion, and wanton violence. Bandits are primarily motivated by the alluring prospects of wealth in a region blighted by poverty and poor socioeconomic outcomes. However, this does not exclude the fact that fundamentalist Islamist groups operate in the same space as bandits. There is the possibility that some bandit groups might have adopted more of a religious *modus operandi* on their initiative or through limited contact with extremist groups.

While the report notes the dearth of studies investigating in detail the theoretical and functional nature of the relationship between banditry and terrorism in these four states, the preliminary evidence points to the existence of both environmental and operational convergence between bandits and Islamist fundamentalist groups in the focal states.

Based on the analysis and findings, the report observes the following operational nexus between banditry and Islamist fundamentalism in the focal states:

- The presence of many young persons who, through exposure to banditry, are experienced in the use of firearms and unconventional warfare provides a well-resourced human asset pool that terror groups can draw from. Essentially, terror groups already have useable operational

assets in the focal states,

- Bandits have effectively colonised forest reserves and a large swath of lands in rural communities across the focal states, these geographical spaces have provided a haven for terror groups to operate and fester,
- Emergent studies point to the possibility of bandits and terrorist groups collaborating in undertaking attacks, particularly largescale kidnapping of school children, which has come to be the hallmark of banditry in the focal states,
- Both bandits and terror groups have mastered the political economy of kidnapping for ransom and extortion to fund operations and acquire a progressively sophisticated armoury locally. This points to a mutual understanding and copying of operational methodology by bandits and terror groups in the focal states; and
- Available information points to a system of arms and other logistical trade/exchange between bandits and terror groups in the focal states.



Photo:

Man sitting in his hut.
Source: AFP [https://
interactive.afp.
com/features/The-
Fulani_613/](https://interactive.afp.com/features/The-Fulani_613/)

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL BACKGROUND

Prior to, and since return to democratic rule, Nigeria has faced serious internal security challenges – the most critical ones currently being the Jama'a Ahl as-Sunna Li-da'wa waal-Jihad, popularly known as Boko Haram, the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS); and the Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) insurgency, predominantly in the North-East states; the “Fulani Herdsmen” attacks in states like Benue, Plateau, Zamfara, Taraba and Kaduna; Niger-Delta militancy and spates of kidnappings all over the country. There are also security challenges posed by ethno-religious conflicts, resource-based conflicts, violent crimes, and election related violence. Another crisis that recently emerged in Nigeria's Northwest is the ongoing activities

of armed groups referred locally as 'banditry' which has affected most of the population living in Kaduna, Katsina, Niger and Zamfara States. Largely unconnected to the terrorist activities in the Northeast, banditry became noticeable in 2014 with cattle rustling activity. It became progressively worse in 2016 when the bandits started killings people in the focal states¹. Obviously, these challenges impede socio-political stability and economic development not only in Nigeria but in the West African sub-region.

The causes of banditry in the Northwest are complex and interrelated. At its root, environmental degradation caused by

¹ Mohammed, I (2021). No End in Sight for Insecurity and Banditry in Northwestern Nigeria. *Terrorism Monitor*. The James Town Foundations. Available at <https://jamestown.org/program/no-end-in-sight-for-insecurity-and-banditry-in-northwestern-nigeria/>

pressures of climate change and rapid population growth has aggravated resource competition between predominantly Fulani herders and mostly Hausa farmers, both of whom have over time mobilised armed groups in the form of bandits for protection. Conflicts over land prompted both farmers and herders to form armed self-defence groups, fuelling a cycle of retaliatory violence that has taken on a communal dimension. In the middle of a flourishing trade in small arms and light weapons, organised groups of criminals operating from ungoverned forest spaces have proliferated, engaging in armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom to extortion, and cattle rustling.

The recent space of violence in the Northwest has

About 1,527 people were killed by bandits in 2020, higher than the 1,508 persons reportedly killed by terrorist groups in the Northeast in the same year

led to the deaths of many people. About 1,527 people were killed by bandits in 2020, higher than the 1,508 persons reportedly killed by terrorist groups in the Northeast in the same year². From January to March 2021, armed groups in Kaduna state killed 323 people (compared to 628 in 2020) and kidnapped 949 others³.

In July 2021, banditry attacks in numerous communities in the focal states led to the deaths of 459 persons, abduction of 390 others, and

² Crisis Group (2021). Halting the Deepening Turmoil in Nigeria's North West. Available at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/halting-deepening-turmoil-nigerias-north-west>

³ Crisis Group (2021). Halting the Deepening Turmoil in Nigeria's North West. Available at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/halting-deepening-turmoil-nigerias-north-west>

raiding of tens of villages⁴. About 279,000 persons were displaced in Sokoto, Zamfara and Katsina by the end of 2020, while more than 2.6 million people across the three states are facing food insecurity in 2021⁵.

Besides the killings and displacement, the bandits shot down an Air Force jet and engaged in retaliatory attacks on villagers for providing information about them to security operatives. Most importantly, their demands have now gone beyond demanding ransom from families of kidnapped victims to include the release of fellow gang members or their relatives and a call to end all military or community efforts against banditry.

The nature of banditry in Kaduna, Katsina,

Niger and Zamfara States bears the operational footprints of the terrorists' groups in the country, especially in the abductions of school children and demand for ransom, killings of security operatives, and demand for the release of their gang members. bandits in the study area the same as terrorists? What is the distinction between banditry and terrorism?

⁴ Council on Foreign Relations (2021). Nigeria Security Tracker, available at <https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483>

⁵ Crisis Group (2021). Halting the Deepening Turmoil in Nigeria's North West. Available at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/halting-deepening-turmoil-nigerias-north-west>

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Various qualitative methods were used for this research report. These methods include:

- i. Desk review and analysis of data collected through primary and secondary sources. Secondary data from books, journals, magazines, unpublished works, dailies, periodicals, and other online sources were extensively reviewed and contextually analysed to provide insight into the four focal states' socioeconomic development, origin, evolution drivers of banditry in states. The study examined the relationship between banditry and terrorism and their security and policy implications.
- ii. The report also utilised purposive sampling, which is a non-probability sampling method in selecting the four focal states. The selection was informed by the states' geopolitical relevance- size, population, positioning on Nigeria's borderline and relevance to Nigeria's security and infrastructural architecture- and GJF's strategic focus regarding public safety and security in Nigeria.
- iii. Consolidation of findings with feedback from stakeholders. In undertaking qualitative

research in the focal states, the experiences of some critical stakeholders were documented through key informant interviews. The interviews were cluster based on providing better context to literature and presenting the experience of stakeholders systemically.

Twenty-four respondents were interviewed across the focal states. This list of critical stakeholders includes journalists, traditional and community leaders, policing actors and security experts, women leaders, leaders of community-based organisations, researchers and scholars working on the subject of banditry in the Northwest. The communities selected are mainly rural communities that have experienced banditry across the focal states. The identity of the respondents and communities is however protected due to ethical and security considerations.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The research is limited to purposive selection of few states across two geopolitical zones which impacts the report's ability to generalise



Photo:

findings. Additionally, there was reluctance by some stakeholders to participate in the study. This is mainly as a result of concerns around safety and security across communities in the focal states.

An Adara farmer injured in the abdomen. Source: AFP https://interactive.afp.com/features/The-Fulani_613/

SCOPE OF REPORT

The study seeks to empirically understand the nexus between terrorism and banditry in the focal states. And also explore strategies and actions required by various stakeholders at both national and subnational levels to counter the wildly spreading firestorm of banditry and terrorism in Nigeria. Nexus in context of the

study is defined as the geographical, operational, asset and financial relationships between bandits and fundamentalist Islamist groups in the focal states, that is either independently or mutually beneficial, whether intended or not.

CONTEXTUALIZING THE STUDY AREAS

KADUNA STATE

In terms of socio-economic development, Kaduna State is one of the most prominent states in North-Western Nigeria. Created in 1967 as North-Central State, which also encompassed the current Katsina State, Kaduna State achieved its current borders in 1987. Bordered by 7 States, Zamfara, Katsina, and Kano to the north; Bauchi and Plateau to the east; Nasarawa to the south, Niger to the west and Abuja to the southwest, this highlights the importance of the state to security and governance in the region.

With a population projection of around 9.4 million¹ the state is the third most populous state in Nigeria and a 46,053 square kilometres landmass that makes it the fourth largest

territory in Nigeria. The state has one of the youngest population demographics in Nigeria, with 75% of its inhabitants under 35 years. Although region-wise, the state has a relatively high literacy rate of 47%, unemployment rate is at 30% and 75% of the state's population living live in rural areas². After Borno State, Kaduna remains the second most troubled state in Northern Nigeria. The state has a long history of violent conflicts over access to resources, community leadership, control of markets and religious freedom³.

According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, 220 violent events havez

² National Bureau of Statistics, 2017

³ SB Morgen, Southern Kaduna, A Critical Look (2017) (<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Southern-Kaduna.pdf>)

¹ <https://kdbns.ng/>

Kaduna State in context



Created in 1967 but achieved its current borders in 1987.



Boarded by 7 States: Zamfara, Katsina, Kano, Bauchi, Niger and Abuja



Has a population of about 9.4 million people.



Has the third largest landmass in at 46,053 square kilometres



Boarded by 7 States: Zamfara, Katsina, Kano, Bauchi, Niger and Abuja

resulted in nearly a thousand fatalities in the state and close to 400 persons have been abducted for ransom and hundreds of communities destroyed causing the displacement of more than 50,000 people⁴. The drivers of insecurity in the state are incessant farmer- herder conflict; criminal gangs who engage in kidnapping for ransom, arms dealing, cattle rustling, and

highway robbery; and the third as the latest entrant are Jihadist militants, particularly Ansaru. Despite this very bleak security outlook, Kaduna State remains gateway to the North with a young working age and consumer population and it is one of the fastest reforming states in Nigeria attracting foreign direct investments of USD 500 million in the last two years⁵

4 Olajumoke Ayandele, Confronting Nigeria's Kaduna Crisis (2021), African Centre for Strategic Studies. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/africacenter.org-Confronting%20Nigerias%20Kaduna%20Crisis_0.pdf

5 <https://kdsg.gov.ng/about-kaduna/>

KATSINA STATE

Katsina State is one of the States in the North West that is presently affected by banditry, cattle rustling and kidnapping. The latest entrant to the banditry business in the state is the motorcycle-riding armed bandits operating out of abandoned forest reserves...

Katsina, state, as one of the states in North-Western Region was formed from the northern half of Kaduna state in 1987. Katsina is bordered by the Republic of Niger to the north, Jigawa and Kano States to the east, Kaduna to the south, and Zamfara to the west. With a landmass of 24,192 square kilometres, the state is ranked nationally at 17th in terms of landmass and population wise, ranks 5th with a population of around 8million¹. Poverty rate is 56.42%, making the state the 13th poorest

state in Nigeria², adult literacy is put at 38%, with only 58% of primary school pupils finishing 6 years of primary education and literacy rate among young women is 27%³. Unemployment rate is 39.5%⁴. Maternal mortality rate is 927 deaths per 100,000 livebirths⁵.

Katsina State is one of the States in the North

2 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1121438/poverty-headcount-rate-in-nigeria-by-state/>

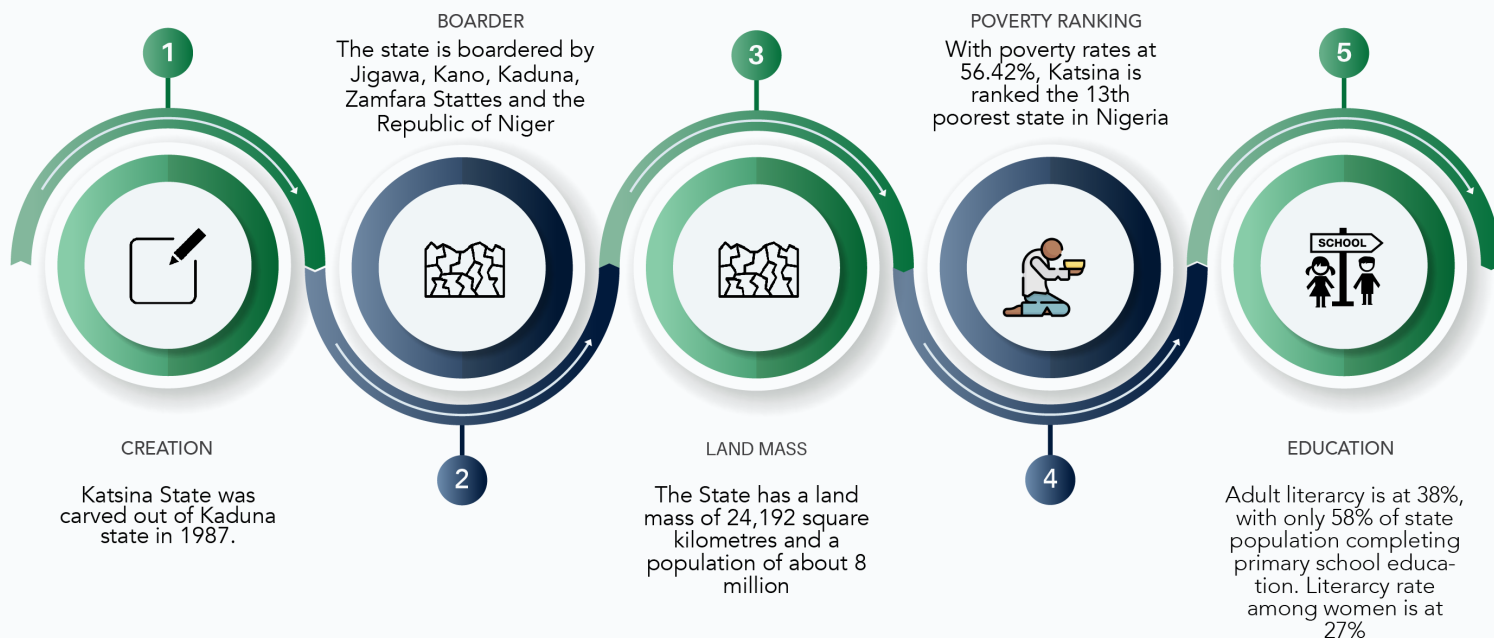
3 <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/1631/file>

4 https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pdfuploads/Q2_2020_Unemployment_Report.pdf

5 Fawole A, Shah A, Fabanwo A, Adegbola O, Adewunmi A, Eniyewun AB, et al, Predictors of maternal mortality in institutional deliveries in Nigeria. African Health Sciences (2012), 12:32

1 National Bureau of Statistics, Demographic Statistics Bulletin (2017)

KATSINA STATE IN CONTEXT



West that is presently affected by banditry, cattle rustling and kidnapping. The latest entrant to the banditry business in the state is the motorcycle-riding armed bandits operating out of abandoned forest reserves, who target rural communities⁶

6 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53009704>

ZAMFARA STATE

Zamfara state was created by the military administration of the Late General Sani Abacha from Sokoto State in 1996. The state has an area of 38,418 square kilometres, making the 7th largest state in Nigeria. It is bordered to the north by the Republic of the Niger, to the south by Kaduna State, to the east by Katsina State, and to the west by the states of Sokoto and Niger. With a population of around of 9.3 million persons¹, the state ranks 11th most populous state in Nigeria, thus highlighting the importance of the state to governance in Nigeria.

The state's performances are poor on some of the indexes benchmarking development. Adult literacy is put at 26.2%², poverty rate is put at 73.98%³ and Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) is 1,100 deaths per 100,000 per live births. Infant mortality is 104/1000 per live births⁴. Zamfara State is one of the states most affected by banditry in Nigeria. According to a report by the Zamfara State government, between 2011 and 2019, at least 6,319 people were killed,

3,672 kidnapped and more than 500 villages were burnt by bandits in the state⁵

According to a report by the Zamfara State government, between 2011 and 2019, at least 6,319 people were killed, 3,672 kidnapped and more than 500 villages were burnt by bandits in the state.

1 <https://web.archive.org/web/20180114070509/http://population.gov.ng/core-activities/surveys/dataset/2006-phc-priority-tables/>

2 <https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pdfuploads/National%20Literacy%20Survey,%202010.pdf>

3 National Bureau of Statistics, 2019 Poverty And Inequality In Nigeria: Executive Summary (2019)

4 <https://www.mnch2.com/zamfara-state/>

5 <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2019/04/10/over-3000-killed-500-villages-affected-in-zamfara-says-yari/%20https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2019/04/10/over-3000-killed-500-villages-affected-in-zamfara-says-yari/>

ZAMFARA STATE IN CONTEXT

ADULT LITERACY

The state has adult literacy benchmarked at 26.2%



POPULATION DENSITY

Zamfara state has a population density of about 9.3 million and is ranked the 11th populous state in Nigeria.



SECURITY STATUS

6319 people were killed in Zamfara state between 2011 - 2019, while 3672 were kidnapped by bandits with about 500 villages burnt.



MATERNAL MORTALITY RATIO

Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) is 1,100 deaths per 100,000 per live births. While, Infant mortality is 104/1000 per live births



NIGER STATE

Niger state created in 1976 is in North Central region and it is bounded to the south by the Niger River. It is also bounded by the states of Kebbi and Zamfara to the north, Kaduna to the north and northeast, Kogi to the southeast, and Kwara State to the south. The Abuja Federal Capital Territory is on Niger state's eastern border, and the Republic of Benin is its western border. The state has the largest landmass in Nigeria, standing at 76,363 square kilometres, which is almost a tenth of the entire Nigerian landmass of which 85% is arable. The population of the state is around 4million¹. Literacy among young women in the state is put at 28%, net intake in primary education is low at 25% and the state has one of the lowest transition rates to secondary education in Nigeria². Poverty headcount rate for the state is 66.11%³.

Niger state is the latest entrants to Nigeria's enlarging geography of bandits and insecurity, as schools and farming communities have been repeatedly targeted by bandits, with the latest being the abduction of 150 students of an Islamic school in May, 2021⁴



Rural woman. Source: AFP https://interactive.afp.com/features/The-Fulani_613/

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1 <https://nigerstate.gov.ng/about-niger/>

2 <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/1631/file>

3 <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/1631/file>
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1121438/poverty-headcount-rate-in-nigeria-by-state/>

4 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57300643>

NIGER STATE

IN CONTEXT

LANDMASS

Niger State has the largest landmass in Nigeria at 76,363 square kilometres



POPULATION DENSITY

The state has a population density of about 4 million people



POVERTY RATE

The poverty head count rate in the state is estimated at 66.11%



EDUCATION

Literacy among women is estimated at 28% though the state general educated population is estimated at 25%.



2022

A map of the African continent with several states in the north and west highlighted in a dark blue color. These highlighted states include Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, and Nigeria. The rest of the continent is shown in a light green color with black outlines for national borders.

GEOPOLITICAL
RELEVANCE OF
THE FOCAL STATES

“

The focal states are very critical to both national security and infrastructural architecture. Niger State hosts three Hydro-Electric Dams

Key findings

- Three of the four focal states- Katsina, Niger and Zamfara- that are the subject of this study are territorially contiguous and collectively share international boundaries with the Niger Republic and Republic of Benin;
- 2 of the 4 contiguous focal states have international boundaries that are documented pathways for transhumance, human smuggling and arms smuggling highlighting the nightmarish security challenges the states face;
- The states have some of the largest landmass in Nigeria and collectively have a landmass of 164,370 square kilometres. This extensive landmass, which are largely composed of forestlands, network of rivers and mountain ranges present some formidable challenge to policing and governance;
- With the exception of Kaduna State, the other 3 states have consistently performed comparatively poorly on all socio-economic indicators benchmarking education, healthcare, employment and other public infrastructure;
- The focal states are very critical to both national security and infrastructural architecture. Niger State hosts three Hydro-Electric Dams: Shiroro Hydro-Electric Dam; Kainji Hydro-Electric Dam; And Jebba Hydro-Electric Dam and Kaduna State as Nigeria's Westpoint is a primal centre of military education and security planning;
- The states have similar informal institutions of governance, socio-cultural similarities and historical links;

KEY FINDINGS:

ORIGIN, EVOLUTION AND MANIFESTATIONS BANDITRY IN THE STUDY STATES

Banditry is the major insecurity problem in Kaduna, Katsina, Niger and Zamfara States. However, there are contextual differences in its origin, evolution, and manifestations. In Zamfara state, at least 10,000 armed bandits and cattle rustlers operate in eight major camps. Some narratives trace banditry's origin in the states

to poorly managed resource conflict between pastoralists and farmers. Others linked illegal mining as the origin of the armed phase of banditry, which is currently witnessed in the state. According to the former Inspector General of Police- Mohammed Adamu- there is "a strong and glaring nexus between the

activities of armed bandits and illicit miners"¹. Those who sponsor illegal mining also fund banditry and cattle rustling in mining communities to incite violence among cattle breeders and rearers.

Niger state is the least affected state among the four states studied. The origin of banditry in Niger state is not directly traceable to farmers-pastoralists conflict but rather the state's invasion by dislodged bandits from the Kaduna side of the vast Birnin Gwari forest, which connects Niger and Kaduna States in 2014. Essentially, banditry was imported into the state and has since spread to various communities in the state. About 18 local governments have witnessed attacks, with most attacks concentrated in Shiroro, Munyan, Rafi, Mashegu and Paiko. Bandits have reportedly killed 380 persons in the state, 71 persons kidnapped, and more than N79m paid as ransom².

Banditry in Katsina state was imported from neighbouring Zamfara State in 2010³. Seven Local Government Areas shared boundaries with Zamfara state, namely- Jibia, Batsari, Safana, Danmusa, Kankara, Faskari and Sabua⁴.

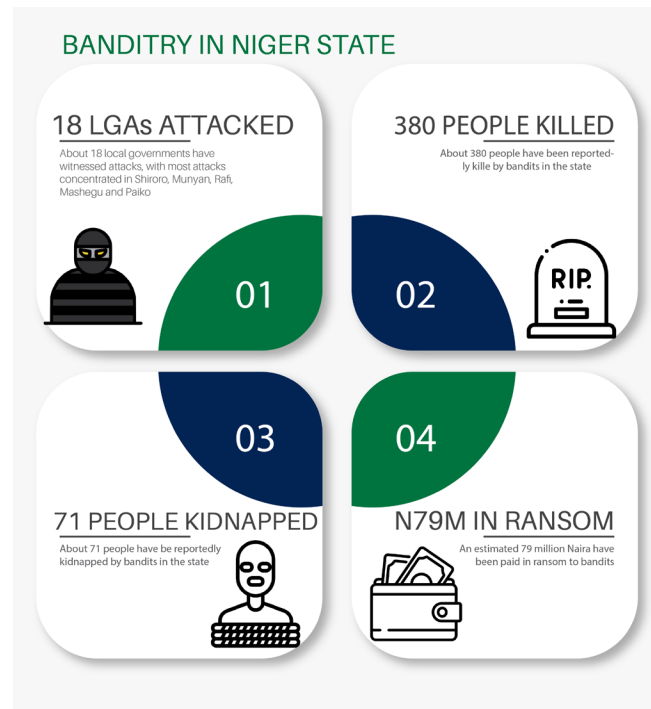
Bandits often use these locations to perpetuate their activities. The bandit groups utilise motorcycles to raid border communities and

1 "Nigeria suspends mining in troubled state to halt armed banditry", The Guardian, April 7, 2019.

2 "Seven years of banditry in Niger State: 380 killed, 71 abducted, N79m paid as ransom", Vanguard Newspaper, February 13, 2021

3 Suleiman Ladan and Bilkisu Mutawalli, 'Impacts of Banditry on Food Security in Katsina State, Nigeria', Direct Research Journal of Agriculture and Food Science, (2020), 8 (12), 439.

4 "After Several Attacks, Gov. Matawalle Concede that Bandits Still Operates in Zamfara", Desert Herald Newspaper, July 21, 2020.



return to their forest dens.

The origin and evolution of banditry in Kaduna State follow the orthodoxy of historical out-of-control conflicts between farmers and pastoralists over resources. Kaduna state has a long history of violent disputes between Fulani pastoralists and settler communities in southern Kaduna. Some of these events occurred in 2000 and expanded in 2013. There are reports that 33 vigilantes and community members in Dogon Dawa and Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area were killed in 2013⁵.

TRENDS AND DRIVERS OF BANDITRY IN THE FOCAL STATES

Extant studies show that banditry can be classified based on the underlying drivers and established trends. The dominant driving motivation of banditry in Nigeria is primarily economic, and most bandits operate autonomously and are self-commissioned. Multiple sources reveal that criminal gangs are primarily dominated by Nigerian citizens indigenous to the areas blighted by banditry ⁶. This information in the literature is validated by a key informant interview with a community leader who stated that "*most of them (bandits) are youths (probably below 35years) and are Fulani as well as Hausas, Kanuri and other ethnic nationalities based on their physical appearance and the language they speak[...]*"

However, another respondent from Niger state reveal that "*bandits who attack the communities*

5 Abdulgafar Alabelewe, Living Dangerously with Bandits in Kaduna, The Nation Newspaper, July 24, 2021.

6 "Banditry: It's Hausa-Fulani war, Zamfara traces origin of hostilities", Punch Newspaper, April 3, 2021.

in Niger state are from Hausas, Fulanis, Gungawa, Kambari, Kabawa, or Dakkarawa ethnic groups."⁷.

Across the focal states, the primary base of operations of these gangs is rural communities, with bases deep in forest reserves and mountains - providing great opportunities and hideouts for their criminality. Bandits don't have formalised structures and identities, nor are they cohesive with a discernible command structure like most militias. Instead, they operate in informal and independent clusters. The uniting factor between and among bandit groups is the opportunity for pillage and intergroup and territorial conflicts, which are regular among bandits⁸.

Profit and personal enrichment drive banditry rather than political, ideological or any sectional interest⁹. In a region where poverty and lack of economic opportunity are common denominators, banditry offers tempting prospects that farming and herding cannot. Moreover, extortion, ransom and other criminal funds from banditry drives the regional trade in small arms and light weapons and lubricates transnational crime in the Sahel¹⁰.

Interview responses reveal that the drivers of banditry include a total exclusion of pastoralists in governance. "The government does not

7 Key Informant Interview with a senior Journalist of the Zamfara State Media Cooperation

8 "Bandits fight each other in Kaduna forest, kingpin Nasiru Kachalla, others killed", Vanguard Newspaper, December 28, 2020.

9 <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2021/03/04/who-are-the-bandits-behind-nigerias-mass-kidnappings/>.

10 <https://www.cfr.org/blog/kidnapping-and-ransom-payments-nigeria>

regulate the pastoralist subsector. Most of these herdsmen live in the bush with their animals completely ignorant of government functions, civic duties or any code of conduct required of them." **endemic poverty**- "our people are neglected by those they elected into various offices hence leaving them in abject poverty"; **access to a resource**- "Scarcity of resources and failure of government to equitably allocate such scarce resources among competing users"; **its lucrative nature** "the lucrative nature of the enterprise, and lack of capacity on the part of the government to deal with bandits appropriately"; **failure of conflict resolution mechanism**- "failure of government to create appropriate conflicts resolution framework in order to manage the conflict between farmers and nomadic herdsmen effectively", **conspiracy against the Nigerian state**- "local and international conspiracy against Nigeria and its people"; "unemployment among youths"; **inefficient policing system**- "We have no single police officer in the village. Lack of security personnel in our village is one of the reasons". "There is no adequate intelligence gathering. The success of the security is dependent on timely and accurate information. Had it been we heard timely information, they would not have been able to ambush our patrol car and escape". "People no longer fear God; most of the people nowadays worship money and want to get rich at all cost."¹¹

“

The uniting factor between and among bandit groups is the opportunity for pillage and intergroup and territorial conflicts, which are regular among bandits.

Profit and personal enrichment drive banditry rather than political, ideological or any sectional interest.

11 Some of the extracted opinion of stakeholders in communities across the 4 focal state

DIFFERENTIATING BANDITRY AND TERRORISM

Banditry is primarily motivated by the alluring prospects of wealth in a region blighted by poverty and poor socioeconomic outcomes. Bandits have realised the enormous millions of naira that can be extorted from rural communities and road users as ransom. Consequently, they have used the funds to promote further and create efficiency of their very lucrative criminal enterprises. There is no discernible ideological persuasion underpinning banditry beyond theft, extortion and wanton violence. Communities of all faiths, ethnicities and socioeconomic status across the focal states have been victims of attacks by these criminal groups. Representatives of Fulani herder communities claimed that hundreds of their members had been kidnapped by bandits, and cattle herds have been lost to attacks. Hundreds of rural farming communities have been sacked by these gangs, with thousands of farmers killed¹. On the other hand, the motivations driving terrorism tend to be ideological or political. Most definitions outline the following key criteria: target, objective, motive, perpetrator, and legitimacy or legality as the fundamental hallmark of acts of violence categorised as terrorism².

The media have interchangeably used the terms 'bandits' and 'terrorists' to describe the criminal gangs that communities have accused of being responsible for rising cases of murders, kidnap for

1 'Katsina: The motorcycle bandits terrorising northern Nigeria' BBC News, July 5, 2020

2 Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, (1988) New York, Columbia University Press. p. 17

ransom, sexual violence, among others. This tends to shift security and political focus from the issues, particularly brutal incidences of attack with high casualty rates, as the basics for classifying the concept of terrorism and banditry. This is not to exclude the fact that fundamentalist Islamist groups operate in the same space as bandits, and there is the possibility that some bandit groups might have adopted more of a religious modus operandi on their initiative or through limited contact with extremist groups³.

ISLAMIC INSURGENCY AND TERRITORIAL AMBITIONS

In December 2020, the abduction of more than 300 schoolboys in Kankara, Katsina State and the subsequent claim of responsibility by the late factional leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, for the first time brought to fore the possibility of a nexus between bandits and Islamist fundamentalist groups in the focal states⁴. While Boko Haram remains largely the face of Islamist extremism in Nigeria, there has been an evolution in the leadership structure, modus operandi

3 James Barnett, *Investigating The 'Boko Haram' Presence In Niger State* (2021)(<https://www.hudson.org/research/16878-investigating-the-boko-haram-presence-in-niger-state>)

4 "Boko Haram claims kidnapping of hundreds of Nigerian students" Aljazeera News, December 15, 2020 (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/15/boko-haram-claims-kidnapping-of-hundreds-of-nigerian-students>)

and outlook of the Jihadist group. Also, there are new entrants into the Islamist terror market in Nigeria. In 2016, there was a split in the leadership of Boko Haram, and a breakaway faction is sworn allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The second faction remained under the late Abubakar Shekau (Jama'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Daw'ah wal-Jihad or JAS), who was reportedly killed in a conflict with other terror faction and has since been succeeded by Bakura Modu⁵. The third faction, known as the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), was formed under Abu Musab al-Barnawi, one of the sons of the founder of Boko Haram⁶.

The split in the terror franchise has further complicated the already burdened Nigerian state and worsened security and public policy challenges for the government and other regional stakeholders. The new terror dynamics points to the imperatives of territorial expansion. Moreover, Boko Haram, particularly under Shekau, has long been interested in expanding its base beyond Nigeria's Northeast. Due to deteriorating security and social disequilibrium conditions the Northwest and north-central regions are increasingly becoming their areas of choice.

Media reports reveal that some terror groups participated in the Kankara schoolboys' abduction and that the link between terror

groups and bandits predated the incident⁷. The presence of fundamentalist groups is further validated by disseminated video recordings of messages of greetings sent by Boko Haram fighters to their colleagues in Zamfara and Niger states. Three weeks later, the greeting was reciprocated by fighters in Niger State⁸.

The governor of Niger State confirmed during a press conference the presence of Boko Haram in the state. Stating that 'I am confirming that there are Boko Haram elements here in Niger State, here in Kaure, I confirm that they have hoisted their flags here. The wives (of the villagers) have been seized from them and forcefully attached to Boko Haram members. I just heard that they had placed their flags at Kaure, meaning they have taken over the territory⁹.

There are numerous reasons for Shekau's forays into the Northwest and north-central areas. These include the desire to create an Islamic state beyond the Northeast, recruitment and financial gains from ransom payments and other activities like illegal gold mining¹⁰.

5 'Boko Haram Names Successor For Dead Leader Shekau', The Will, June 19, 2021 (<https://thewillnigeria.com/news/boko-haram-names-successor-for-dead-leader-shekau/>)

6 Eromo Egbejule (2019) Death, anguish and flickers of hope: 10 years of Boko Haram, Aljazeera News (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/7/30/death-anguish-and-flickers-of-hope-10-years-of-boko-haram>)

7 <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/boko-haram-teams-up-with-bandits-in-nigeria>

8 Aliyu Dahiru, Militia Groups In North-West Nigeria In Process Of Sealing Allegiance With Boko Haram, HumAngle (2020) (<https://humangle.ng/militia-groups-in-north-west-nigeria-in-a-process-of-sealing-allegiance-with-boko-haram/>)

9 'Boko Haram now occupying Niger communities-Governor', Premium Times, April 26, 2021 (<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/457747-boko-haram-now-occupying-niger-communities-governor.html>)

10 <https://jamestown.org/program/boko-harams-expansionary-project-in-northwestern-nigeria-can-shekau-outflank-ansaru-and-islamic-state-in-west-africa-province/>

BLURRED NEXUS: TERRORISM AND BANDITRY

The crime-terror nexus refers to either the environmental or operational convergence of violent non-state actors with divergent objectives and naturally utilise different tactics to achieve their goals. The crime-terror nexus can be distilled into the following five organisational dynamics. The first is co-existence which implies, the operation of criminal and terrorist groups in the same territorial space. The second is the appropriation of activity, and this is criminal organisations deploying terrorist tactics and terrorist organisations engaged in criminal activities for strategic advantages. The third refers to alliances between terrorist groups and criminal gangs, a symbiotic collaboration where criminal and terrorist organisations collaborate and contribute in their areas of expertise to achieve their respective goals. The fourth refers to the merger of criminal groups with terrorist organisations or vice versa. The fifth is the transformation of criminal gangs to terrorist organisations and vice versa¹.

The opinion of some researchers as to the nature of banditry in the Northwest and Niger State is that bandits are primarily criminal gangs who are involved in criminality for pecuniary purposes rather than any ideological or political purpose. Also, it has been established that

Islamist fundamentalist groups operate in the same geographical areas as bandits. Despite the co-existence of bandits and Islamist fundamentalists in the same space, bandits still dominate the population and resources.

As we investigate the details and exact nature of the relationship between banditry and terrorism in the four focal states, the following patterns have emerged as to the probable fields of engagement/nexus between bandits as criminal gangs and Islamist fundamentalist as terrorists in the states:

- *Availability of Well-Resourced Human Assets*

While the estimated number of bandits operating in the four focal states remain contested, a number between 10,000 and 100,000 has been suggested by some stakeholders². Some men and women have more than ten years of experience in armed banditry, are very familiar with the focal states' geographical terrain, and have informants and networks within the larger society³. Also, when one considers that some of the bandits are recruits from rural communities,

1 Chris Dishman, "Terrorism, crime, and transformation." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (2001), 24(1) 43-47

2 '10,000 Bandits, Cattle Rustlers Operating In Zamfara – Yari' Daily Trust, April 26, 2019; "No school is safe until govt negotiates with bandits, says Gumi" *The Punch*, June 21, 2021;

3 "Bandits have Informants in Kidnapped District Head's Community, Says Niger Gov", *Thisday Newspaper* January 4, 2021

who were lured into banditry as a result of monetary reward and the fact that the region blighted by extreme poverty, the availability of tens of thousands of men experienced in warfare for hire is a security nightmare.

The fact that fundamentalist groups already have ready-made and easily deployable human resources in the focal states to advance their Islamist territorial agenda makes the region attractive. The focal states are replete with independent and well-resourced gangs hired or influenced for ideological purposes. This becomes a significant pointer at the subtle nexuses between banditry and terrorism in the focal states.

- **Provision of Haven for Terror Groups**

Unfortunately, geography is one of the main enablers of banditry in the focal states. The four focal states have vast and rugged forestlands; some sit astride porous borderlines across state frontiers that bandits have colonised and are mainly made ungovernable. First, Kuyanbana forest linking Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna and Niger states. Second, the Kamuku forest covering an area of 1,121 kilometres square from Kaduna to Zamfara, Katsina, Niger and Kebbi states. Rumah/Kukar Jangarai Forest Reserve covers an area of about 800 kilometres from the Northwest of Katsina state to Zamfara state, and finally, the Rugu forest, which stretches from the Birnin Gwari area of Kaduna state into Katsina and Zamfara states⁴.

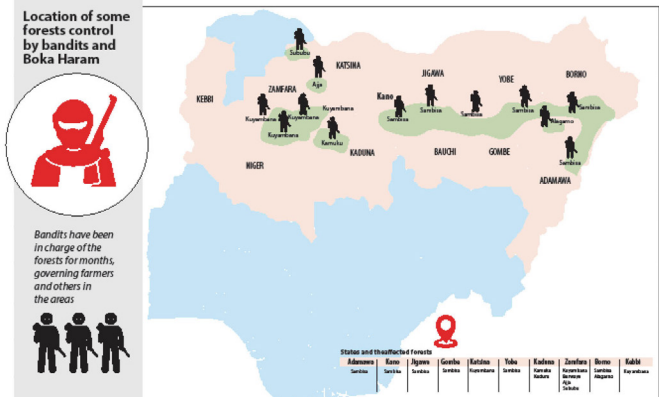
Bandits have colonised these forestlands and

4 International Crisis Group, Violence in Nigeria's North West: Rolling Back the Mayhem, Africa Report N°288 (2020), 6

are now staging grounds for attack and refuge from security attacks. These ungoverned spaces have

Bandits have colonised these forestlands and are now staging grounds for attack and refuge from security attacks. These ungoverned spaces have become a haven for fundamentalist groups desperately seeking an operational foothold in the focal states. Niger State presents a perfect example of this with the launching and occupation of villages in Shiroro by late Abubakar Shekau's JAS⁵.

The foregoing provokes the critical question. What are some of the bandit's groups' chances to transform into terror groups or even merge with fundamentalist Islamist groups? The likelihood is high considering the loose organisational setup of bandit groups,



Some of the Forests Dominated by Bandits across focal States

Source: Daily Trust Newspapers (<https://dailytrust.com/9-forests-governed-by-bandits-b-haram>)

and when that happens, it presents different sets of security challenges.

5 Malik Samuel, Boko Haram teams up with bandits in Nigeria, Institute of Security Studies (2021) (<https://issafrica.org/iss-today/boko-haram-teams-up-with-bandits-in-nigeria>)

- *Jointly Undertaking Attacks*

There have been reports of the late Abubakar Shekau's terror group -JAS- participation in the December 2020 mass abduction of more than 300 schoolboys in Katsina State. The engagement between these bandits and JAS predated that particular mass abduction incident. Similarly, the attack on Munya and Shiroro local government areas in Niger State shows flashes of operational cooperation between bandits and terrorists⁶. While the nature of the relationship between the apparent JAS elements that attacked Shiroro and the bandits that attacked Munya is still unclear, the fact that attacks were carried out simultaneously highlights some of the emerging areas of mutuality between bandits Islamist groups in the focal states.

- *Mutual Usage of logistics and Arms*

There have been records of arms trade between bandits and terror groups, particularly the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP)⁷. The progressive sophistication of arms borne by bandits points to a network of international arms smuggling that service the merchants of death in Nigeria. Looking at how contiguous the focal states are, the flow of arms is understandable.

- *Joint Mastery of the Political Economy of Kidnap for Ransom*

Both bandits and terror groups have mastered the political economy of kidnapping for ransom

and extortion to fund operations and acquire a progressively sophisticated armoury locally. This points to a mutual understanding and copying of operational methodology by bandits and terror groups in the focal states. Bandits fund their operations mainly from the lucrative nature of kidnapping for ransom that mainly targets school children . This tactic is similar to the one earlier deployed by Boko Haram with the kidnapping of school children in Chibok and the subsequent ransom payment before a number of these schoolgirls were released.

6 James Barnett, Investigating The 'Boko Haram' Presence In Niger State (2021) (<https://www.hudson.org/research/16878-investigating-the-boko-haram-presence-in-niger-state>)

7 International Crisis Group, Violence in Nigeria's North West: Rolling Back the Mayhem, Africa Report N°288 (2020), 8

IMPACT OF BANDITRY

The devastation of Communities: Banditry has negatively impacted all communities of faiths and ethnicity across the focal states. Herder communities have claimed that hundreds of their members have been kidnapped by bandits, and more than

a quarter of cattle heads were lost to bandits¹. According to a 2019 report by the Zamfara State government, between 2011 and 2019, bandits killed at least 6,319 people, kidnapped 3,672 people and burnt more than 500 villages in

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53009704>



Zamfara State alone². The activities of bandits have displaced more than 200,000 people. About 35,000 people were forced to relocate to the Niger Republic due to the destruction of their communities. Bandits have reportedly killed more Nigerians than Boko Haram, robbers, kidnappers

and cultists combined and were reportedly responsible for 47.5 per cent of all violent deaths in 2019³.

Food Security Threats: Banditry primarily impacts rural communities—the very communities responsible for producing a substantial percentage of Nigeria's staple food. Bandits primarily target rural communities, displacing and disrupting farming activities, a threat that highlighted by President Buhari already⁴. Banditry is one of the drivers of increases in food prices as food prices are growing at the fastest pace in more than 15 years, and consumer inflation was 18.2% in March⁵.

Imperils Regional Security: Banditry not only offers lucrative and alluring prospects in northwest Nigeria, a region blighted by poverty and lack of socioeconomic opportunities, also funds gained from kidnapping for ransom drives

the trade in small arms and light weapons and lubricates transnational crime in the wider Sahel region, worsening security in an area already blighted by conflicts⁶. Banditry is quickly becoming a transnational organised crime with the continuous influx of non-Nigerians into their

ranks and the internationalisation of kidnapping for ransom across the Nigerian-Nigerien international border⁷.

Cover for Fundamentalist Groups to Spread: The security crisis created by bandits provides the right cover for jihadist groups to increase in the focal states where they had hitherto found it challenging to operate within. The developing mutuality of interests between bandits and jihadists creates a security nightmare in a region more populous than the North-west, where the current focus of bandits is.

2 'Over 3,000 Killed, 500 Villages Affected in Zamfara, Says Yari', This day Newspaper, April 10, 2019

3 'Bandits Kill More Nigerians Than Boko Haram, Robbers, Kidnappers, Cultists, Others' Daily Trust, Daily Trust, September 22, 2019

4 'Insecurity: Buhari pledges action against bandits' Premium Times, May 13, 2021 (<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/461321-insecurity-buhari-pledges-action-against-bandits.html>)

5 Tope Alake, Nigeria's Buhari Warns Rising Banditry a Threat to Food Security, Bloomberg, May 13, 2021 (<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-05-13/nigeria-s-buhari-warns-rising-banditry-a-threat-to-food-security>)

6 John Campbell, Kidnapping and Ransom Payments in Nigeria, Council on Foreign Relations, February 18, 2021 (<https://www.cfr.org/blog/kidnapping-and-ransom-payments-nigeria>)

7 Idrees Ali, U.S. special forces rescue American held in Nigeria: officials', Reuters, October 31, 2020 (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-nigeria-military-idUSKBN27G0JI>)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report extracts and distils some of the most poignant facts and targets them at relevant stakeholders:

a. *National and Subnational Governance Actors and Policy Makers*

It has been argued that the long years of military rule in Nigeria led to the undermining of individual liberties, safety and security. But while the legacies of colonialism, military incursions into politics and corruption have all contributed to the present security situation in the country, undoubtedly the absence of a robust security sector governance architecture is central in explaining the poor response in addressing security challenges in Nigeria.

Nothing highlights the urgency for security sector reform in Nigeria now than the apparent impotence of state security agencies in the face of escalating violence by non-state actors. Whether organic or imported, banditry across the focal states is essentially a local problem, and, unsurprisingly, the current centralised command and control structure is overwhelmed by it.

- Extensive Review of the Extant Policing Framework in Nigeria: one of the lessons that can be learnt from Nigeria and other countries is that militarisation is neither sustainable nor will it address the core

drivers and enablers of the crisis. Therefore, there is a need to change the legal framework, organisational setup, and operational control of the Nigeria Police Force. This will lead to decentralise policing and create a system of a localised and community-focused policing system that allows communities, organisational, human resources and operational input into the policing outfit that secures their communities. It must be emphasised that changing the police structure requires constitutional change, and this will require the collaboration of both the national government and subnational governments in Nigeria

- Regularisation and Support of Existing Vigilantes and Community Based Security Outfits: Irrespective of the nomenclature-state police, a hybrid system of formal and informal policing actors, devolved decision-making system, community policing- there is the need for a system that responds to the contextual security needs of local communities appropriately in the focal states.
- Appropriate Funding Model for Security Services in the Focal States: It is essential to state that while funding is critical, throwing money at the problem without reforming the current policing system will worsen the security situation, as the case of Zamfara

State has proven. The most critical issue is how do we police isolated villages sustainably? How will forest reserves be managed and policed to stop them from being havens for bandits and terrorists? What effective and reliable intelligence network and early warning systems can collectively engender by communities and the state? How can communities be encouraged and incentivised to take charge of their security? A policing reform agenda that answers these questions satisfactorily is the only one that can sustainably change the current situation and narrative.

b. *Informal and Traditional Institutions*

- One of the identified root causes of banditry in the focal states is the failure of informal/traditional systems of conflict resolutions that have managed conflicts fairly and efficiently between farmers and pastoralists for generations. These informal systems have been made redundant, politicised, undermined by formal governance structures, particularly local government administrations. Unfortunately, reducing the involvement of these informal institutions in governance issues at the local level allowed conflicts to fester into crisis. The outcome is banditry and emergent terrorism in the focal states. The following should be done to strengthen informal and traditional institutions. First is the Resuscitation and Strengthening of Emirates Conflict Resolution Systems and Processes in the Focal States: The focal states have established emirates council

systems that have customarily resolved conflicts between farmers and herder, while some of these systems are now redundant, there is the need for interventions first to identify these systems, document them and intervene appropriately to strengthen the conflict resolution systems.

- There is the need to engage traditional institutions as the main community gatekeepers in community engagement. The governments in the focal states need to invest in community engagement to include rural communities in governance decisions and build trust between communities and policing actors in the focal states. The widening sense of alienation and abandonment at some levels worsens the conflict and drives many young people into criminality.

c. *Civil Society Organization and Community Based organisations*

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are important channels through which citizens can participate in the development of public policies and provide citizen oversight, particularly as it relates to banditry and other threats to public safety and security in the focal states by engaging in the following:

- Undertaking Research and Studies: One of the most poignant realities a researcher into rural banditry and gang violence in the focal states will notice is the dearth of information on some critical components of banditry. This is understandable, putting in perspective the fact that banditry mainly

affects rural communities. There is the need for CSOs and CBOs in the affected states to engage more in documenting incidences of banditry, identification of the groups, modus of recruitment, membership and organisational structure, among others to provide the data upon which advocacy and policy engagement can be based.

- Documenting the Experiences of Victims and Affected Communities: Beyond sporadic media, reporting highlighting casualty figures and list of communities attacked, there seems to be a lack of systemic effort to document the names and important evidential information about victims and communities across the focal states. Again, this is one area where the CSOs/CBOs can step in and provide this needed service.
- Providing Platforms of Engagement between Communities and Policing Actors: The impact of the disconnect and distrust between communities and securities agencies in the worsening of banditry in the focal states cannot be overemphasised. CSOs/CBOs are in the best positions to provide a platform of engagement that encourages the consolidation of peaceful and constructive relationships between security institutions and civilian populations across the focal states
- Security Sector Reform Advocacy: CSOs/CBOs are in a position to influence or shape the policy process or public debate on issues relating to security in the focal states. This is best done by interfacing between government policymakers, policing actors

in the field and local communities most affected by banditry.

- Raising Community Security Awareness: The input of CSOs/CBOs alongside security actors is pivotal in informing and educating affected communities on security preparedness and the requisite roles components in communities must play in securing their respective.
- Highlighting Gender Realities: Just like the situation of women in North-eastern Nigeria that is battling the challenges of Islamist terrorism, women at the same time are both victims and operational tools of bandits. Some bandit groups across the focal states rely on women as recruiters and informants in local communities. Unfortunately, women as a group are gravely impacted by the lawless regime of banditry. There is a need for CSOs to undertake targeted community engagement with women clusters across local communities in the focal states.

d. *International and Regional Development Partners*

- Targeted Socioeconomic Interventions to Ameliorate Poverty and Lack of Opportunities: Some of the focal states have some of the worst governance indicators in Nigeria, highlighting the role of unemployment, poverty, lack of opportunity and climate change in worsening the crisis. Unfortunately, many young persons who formed the largest bulk of the population in the focal states have witnessed the enormous wealth that can be made from criminal

enterprises. How does the state wean them off this? Massive investment in agriculture, infrastructure, education and other avenues to increase youth employment is sine-qua-non to solving banditry. International development partners must focus short term and long term interventions in the focal states on programs that empower young people as a way to reduce the temptations of joining criminal gangs

- Supporting Border Management Bodies in Nigeria, Niger Republic, and the Benin Republic: Due to extensive network and reach on ongoing international development interventions on border security (EU, FCDO, DFID, GIZ, USAID, etc.), there is the need to develop targeted capacity development interventions focusing on border management organisations in Nigeria and adjoining countries as one of the strategies to contain banditry. There's no more effective solution than forceful, efficient and appropriate inland and frontier policing in the vast territorial space of the focal states. Such policing must deal with the region's peculiar circumstances of diverse borderlines, forestlands, and hinterlands. This requires a tactical synergy between informal security actors and state security operatives.
- Review of the ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance: Primarily, the focus of the study is the investigation of the nexus between banditry and terrorism in the four focal states. However, several studies have pointed to the struggle over access to

resources between sedentary farmers and nomadic herders as one of the drivers of the conflict, raising questions about the relevance of the ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance. Considering the increasing regional conflicts between farmers and pastoralists, the ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance needs some technical revisions after two decades of operation, while its original spirit should be maintained. The revisions should shift the Protocol's focus from control towards coordination and should reflect the learnt lessons of the last twenty years and the evolution of the conflict between pastoralists and farmers across the region. However, there is a need for extensive input of the various stakeholder clusters before such revision is made. Also, ECOWAS should establish an effective structure to monitor the implementation of the Transhumance Protocol in its Member States.

- Banditry as the New Face of Organized Transnational Crime in the Sahel: While banditry primarily affects local communities in Nigeria, the enablers of this crime are not necessarily local, as several bandit groups source weapons and training from outside Nigeria. This highlights the need for continuous engagement by governments in the Sahel region to contain this local security threat from spreading out, just like the experience with Boko Haram in the Northeast.

CONCLUSION

In terms of loss of lives and devastation of communities, bandits have eclipsed the notorious Boko Haram terrorist and its derivatives. Yet, bandits are primarily an assortment of non-ideologically driven criminal gangs involved in large-scale cattle rustling, sexual violence, kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, pillage, and attacks on gold miners and road users in the focal states. The origin, evolution and context of banditry differ across the four focal states highlighting the local nature of the problem. However, bandit groups are primarily Nigerians from the Fulani and Hausa ethnic groups; membership spans all the major ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria and non-Nigerians.

Unlike militias, with formalised structures and identities, bandits operate in independent clusters that are neither cohesive nor consisting of formalised command structures. Little unites these gangs, but opportunities for pillage, intergroup conflicts and turf wars, and these incidents have been reported among bandits operating in the Northwest. These criminal gangs operate in rural communities, with bases deep in forestlands providing great opportunities and hideouts covering their criminality. However, there is a newly developing phase in the banditry induced security crisis in the focal states with the gradual emergence of Islamist fundamentalist groups in the same geographical space that

has been dominated by bandits alone. This arrival of Islamist fundamentalist groups points to the environmental and operational convergence between bandits and these fundamentalist terror groups and portends new challenges for Nigeria's security architecture managers.

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