

FROM AGITATION TO EXTORTION: UNDERSTANDING THE EVOLUTION OF BANDITRY IN NIGERIA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The rationale of this study is to examine the comprehensive exploration of banditry in Nigeria, tracing its evolution from localized criminal activities to a broader security threat and analyzing its profound implications for security and development. Drawing upon historical, socio-economic, and governance perspectives, the paper elucidates the comprehensive nature of banditry and emphasizes the need for nuanced understanding and strategic interventions. Banditry in Nigeria is depicted as a complex phenomenon shaped by historical legacies, socio-economic disparities, governance failures, and arms proliferation. The paper underscores the importance of addressing underlying drivers and vulnerabilities to effectively mitigate the impact of banditry on security and development. It advocates for a holistic approach that integrates security measures, socio-economic interventions, governance reforms, community engagement, and arms control initiatives. It was recommended and concluded that through strengthened law enforcement, targeted poverty alleviation programs, promotion of good governance, empowerment of local communities, and regional cooperation, Nigeria can confront the challenges posed by banditry and work towards building a more secure, stable, and prosperous society for all its citizens.

Keywords: Agitation, Extortion, Banditry, Security and Development

INTRODUCTION

Banditry in Nigeria has its roots in historical injustices and social grievances that have fueled agitation among marginalized groups (Adams, 2023). The legacy of colonial exploitation, land dispossession, and economic marginalization created conditions ripe for social unrest and resistance, laying the groundwork for the emergence of banditry as a form of protest and rebellion. As agitation evolved over time, banditry in Nigeria transitioned from being driven by socio-political grievances to increasingly incorporating elements of extortion and criminality (Okonkwo, 2021). The shift towards extortion tactics to generate revenue and exert control marked a transformation in the motives and modus operandi of bandit groups operating within the country.

The nexus between agitation and extortion in the context of banditry reflects a complex interplay of historical grievances, socio-economic factors, and evolving power dynamics (Ibrahim & Bello, 2022). The transition from agitational roots to extortionist practices highlights the adaptive nature of criminal groups in responding to changing circumstances and leveraging opportunities for profit and influence. The progression of banditry from agitation to extortion has further complicated the security landscape in Nigeria, posing challenges to governance, law enforcement, and efforts to address criminal activities (Amadi, 2023). The blurring of lines between political agitation and criminal extortion underscores the need for comprehensive strategies that address both the root causes and manifestations of banditry in the country.

Banditry in Nigeria has evolved over time, influenced by a complex interplay of socio-economic inequalities, governance failures, and security challenges (Adetula, 2021). Some empirical studies have highlighted the historical roots of banditry in Nigeria, tracing its origins to pre-colonial conflicts over land, resources, and power dynamics among ethnic groups and communities (Oluwasegun, 2022). Understanding these historical legacies is crucial for comprehending the contemporary manifestations of banditry and its implications for security and development.

Various studies have identified socio-economic disparities and governance deficiencies as key drivers of banditry in Nigeria. Marginalized communities with limited access to economic opportunities, basic services, and infrastructure are particularly vulnerable to recruitment and exploitation

by bandit groups (Umaru, 2021). High levels of poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion exacerbate grievances and fuel resentment towards the state, creating fertile ground for criminal activities and violence (Ibrahim, 2021). Evidence suggests that addressing underlying socio-economic inequalities and promoting inclusive development are essential for mitigating the root causes of banditry and enhancing security and stability in Nigeria.

Obasi (2022) highlighted the role of governance failures and institutional weaknesses in perpetuating banditry and insecurity in Nigeria. Corruption, ineffective law enforcement, and lack of accountability undermine state legitimacy and erode public trust in government institutions. Weak governance structures enable bandit groups to operate with impunity, exploiting gaps in security provision and exploiting local grievances for their gain. The research highlighted the need for comprehensive governance reforms, including strengthening rule of law, enhancing transparency and accountability, and improving service delivery, to address the structural drivers of banditry and promote sustainable development.

In addition, Adebayo, (2021) suggests that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) exacerbates banditry and insecurity in Nigeria. The porous borders, illicit arms trade, and conflicts in neighboring countries facilitate the flow of weapons into Nigeria, supplying bandit groups with the means to perpetrate violence and expand their operations. He further emphasized the importance of regional cooperation and concerted efforts to combat arms trafficking, enhance border security, and strengthen arms control measures to prevent the proliferation of SALW and reduce their impact on banditry and insecurity in Nigeria.

Consequent on the above background, understanding the origin of banditry in Nigeria as a trajectory from agitation to extortion provides insights into the historical, socio-economic, and political dynamics that have shaped the evolution of criminal activities within the country. Addressing these underlying drivers requires comprehensive strategies that promote inclusive development, strengthen governance institutions, and enhance

regional cooperation to mitigate the implications of banditry for security and development in Nigeria. This paper is thus an attempt to examine these issues. It considers the historical, socio-economic, and political factors shaping the emergence and persistence of banditry in Nigeria. It also discusses the implications of banditry for security and national development.

ORIGIN, EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF BANDITRY IN NIGERIA

Banditry in Nigeria has a complex origin that can be traced back to various historical, social, and economic factors. The evolution of banditry in the country reflects a dynamic interaction between these factors, resulting in the emergence of different forms of criminal activities that have plagued various regions of Nigeria.

Historically, banditry in Nigeria can be linked to the period of colonial rule, where socio-economic inequalities and disruptions caused by colonization laid the foundation for criminal activities. The exploitation of resources, displacement of communities, and breakdown of traditional social structures created conditions conducive to the rise of banditry. The socio-economic landscape of Nigeria has played a significant role in the evolution of banditry. Factors such as poverty, unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, and uneven development have contributed to the proliferation of criminal activities. Banditry often thrives in areas with limited access to basic services and economic opportunities. The political dynamics in Nigeria, characterized by corruption, weak governance, and ethno-religious tensions, have also fueled the growth of banditry. Politically motivated violence, arms proliferation, and state failure to provide security have created an enabling environment for criminal elements to thrive.

Banditry in Nigeria exhibits regional variations, with different parts of the country facing distinct challenges. In the northern regions, factors such as insurgency, cattle rustling, and conflicts over land and resources have contributed to the rise of banditry. In the southern regions, issues related to oil theft, kidnapping for ransom, and militant activities have been prominent. The response of security forces to banditry in Nigeria has evolved over time, with efforts to combat criminal activities through various operations and interventions. However, challenges such as inadequate resources, corruption within security agencies, and lack of coordination have hindered the effectiveness of these efforts. Banditry in

Nigeria has had profound social and economic consequences, including loss of lives, displacement of communities, disruption of economic activities, and erosion of trust in institutions. The prevalence of criminal activities has also fostered a climate of fear and insecurity among the population.

The evolution of banditry in Nigeria is also influenced by international factors, including transnational criminal networks, arms smuggling, and illicit financial flows. The interconnected nature of global criminal activities has further complicated efforts to address banditry within the country.

As Nigeria continues to grapple with the challenges posed by banditry, addressing the root causes of criminal activities, improving governance and security structures, and promoting socio-economic development will be crucial in shaping the future trajectory of banditry in the country. The factors contributing to the development of banditry in Nigeria include:

- **Historical Injustices:** The legacy of historical injustices such as colonial exploitation, land dispossession, and marginalization of certain communities has contributed to the development of banditry (Adams, 2023). These have created grievances that fuel criminal activities as a means of seeking retribution or economic empowerment.
- **Socio-Economic Disparities:** Widespread poverty, lack of economic opportunities, and income inequality are significant factors contributing to banditry in Nigeria (Kalu, 2022). The disparity in wealth distribution and limited access to education and basic services drive individuals towards criminal activities in pursuit of survival or wealth accumulation.
- **Weak Governance and Corruption:** The prevalence of weak governance structures, corruption, and lack of accountability within institutions have facilitated the growth of banditry in Nigeria (Oladele, 2021). Corruption within security forces, judicial systems, and public administration undermines efforts to combat criminal activities and fosters a culture of impunity.
- **Ethno-Religious Conflicts:** The presence of ethno-religious tensions and conflicts in various regions of Nigeria has also contributed to the development of banditry (Okoro, 2020). Divisions

along ethnic and religious lines create fertile ground for criminal elements to exploit existing grievances and perpetuate violence for their benefit.

- **Arms Proliferation:** The easy availability and circulation of small arms and light weapons have played a significant role in fueling banditry in Nigeria (UNODC, 2019). The illicit trade in arms not only enables criminal groups to carry out their activities but also escalates the intensity and scale of violence in affected regions.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES: DIFFERENTIATING BANDITRY FROM TERRORISM

Banditry and terrorism are two distinct forms of violence that present unique challenges to security and stability, both globally and in the context of Nigeria. While both involve the use of violence for political or criminal ends, they differ in their objectives, tactics, and organizational structures. Banditry typically revolves around criminal activities such as extortion, kidnapping, and robbery, often motivated by financial gain or control over resources (Umaru, 2021). In contrast, terrorism aims to instill fear and achieve political or ideological goals through indiscriminate attacks on civilians or symbolic targets (Onyedika, 2021).

One key difference between banditry and terrorism lies in their objectives and motivations. Bandits primarily seek financial gain or territorial control, targeting individuals or communities for ransom payments, extortion, or theft (Adetula, 2021). In contrast, terrorists aim to advance political, religious, or ideological agendas by instilling fear and destabilizing societies through acts of violence and intimidation. For example, Boko Haram, a notorious terrorist group operating in Nigeria, seeks to establish an Islamic state and opposes Western education, while bandits in the northwest engage in criminal activities to amass wealth and power.

Another distinction between banditry and terrorism is their target selection and tactics. Bandits typically target individuals or groups perceived as vulnerable, such as travelers, farmers, or herders, with the primary aim of securing financial gain or control over resources (Ibrahim, 2021). They often operate in remote or marginalized areas where state

presence is weak, taking advantage of local grievances and lack of security infrastructure. In contrast, terrorists often target symbolic or high-profile locations, such as government buildings, religious institutions, or transportation hubs, with the aim of maximizing casualties and media attention (Obasi, 2022). They employ tactics such as suicide bombings, mass shootings, or coordinated attacks to sow fear and undermine confidence in government institutions.

Furthermore, banditry and terrorism differ in their organizational structures and affiliations. Bandit groups are typically decentralized and fluid, often consisting of loosely organized networks of criminals or militias with varying degrees of leadership and coordination (Adebayo, 2021). They may form temporary alliances or rivalries based on shifting interests or conflicts over resources. In contrast, terrorist organizations are often more hierarchical and ideologically driven, with clear leadership structures, command chains, and ideological indoctrination processes. For example, groups like ISIS or Al-Qaeda have well-defined organizational structures and global networks, with central leadership exerting control over regional affiliates and operatives.

While both banditry and terrorism involve the use of violence for political or criminal ends, they differ in their objectives, tactics, and organizational structures. Banditry is primarily driven by financial gain or territorial control and targets individuals or communities for extortion or theft. In contrast, terrorism aims to advance political, religious, or ideological agendas through indiscriminate attacks on civilians or symbolic targets. Understanding these differences is crucial for developing effective strategies to combat both forms of violence and enhance security and stability in Nigeria and beyond.

BANDITRY: FROM AGITATION TO EXTORTION

Banditry in Nigeria can be traced back to various socio-economic and political factors, including historical grievances, marginalization, and inadequate governance. Agitation and discontent among certain ethnic groups, particularly in the northern region of the country, have fueled feelings of exclusion and injustice, leading to the emergence of armed groups and criminal elements engaging in banditry (Ezeani, 2020).

States like Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina, and Niger have been particularly affected by banditry, with reports of kidnappings, cattle rustling, and attacks on communities becoming increasingly common (Olatunji, 2021). The complaints from affected communities revolve around issues such as poverty, unemployment, and insecurity, as well as perceived government neglect and failure to provide basic services and security (Ibrahim, 2020).

Before the emergence of extortion and other criminal activities associated with banditry in Nigeria, there were various requests and complaints raised by affected communities and individuals. These grievances stemmed

from a range of socio-economic and political factors, including:

- **Marginalization and Neglect:** Many communities, especially in rural areas of states like Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina, and Niger, felt marginalized and neglected by the government. They complained about the lack of basic infrastructure, such as roads, schools, and healthcare facilities, as well as inadequate access to social services and economic opportunities Olatunji, (2021).
- **Insecurity and Violence:** The escalation of banditry and related violence contributed to a sense of insecurity among local populations. Communities faced frequent attacks, kidnappings, and cattle rustling, which resulted in loss of lives, displacement, and destruction of property. Residents expressed concerns about their safety and the inability of security forces to protect them from criminal elements Abubakar, (2021).
- **Economic Hardship:** The activities of bandits disrupted agricultural activities, trade, and other economic ventures in affected areas. Farmers were unable to access their farmlands due to fear of attacks, while traders faced difficulties transporting goods to markets. This economic hardship exacerbated poverty and unemployment, leading to increased frustration and discontent among the population Ezeani, (2020).
- **Allegations of Corruption and Collusion:** There were allegations of corruption and collusion between security forces and criminal elements involved in banditry. Some communities accused security personnel of turning a blind eye to criminal activities or even actively supporting and profiting from them. These allegations eroded trust in government institutions and hindered efforts to address the security challenges effectively Ukairo & Bello, (2019).
- **Lack of Government Response:** Many communities felt that their complaints were not adequately addressed by the government. They perceived a lack of political will and commitment to addressing the root causes of banditry, as well as a failure to provide timely and effective security interventions. This perceived indifference fueled resentment and disillusionment among affected populations Ibrahim, (2020).

Overall, the requests and complaints raised by communities before the emergence of extortion were indicative of deeper socio-economic and political issues that needed to be addressed. Failure to respond to these grievances in a timely and meaningful manner contributed to the escalation of banditry and its associated criminal activities, including extortion, kidnapping, and violence.

Initially, the Nigerian government's response to the complaints and challenges posed by banditry was inconsistent and often inadequate. While some efforts were made to deploy security forces to affected areas and engage in dialogue with community leaders, these measures were often insufficient to address the root causes of the problem Oluwatobi, (2020). Additionally, there were allegations of corruption and collusion between security forces and criminal elements, further undermining public trust in government institutions Ukairo & Bello, (2019).

Over time, the situation escalated as bandits increasingly turned to extortion, kidnapping for ransom, and other criminal activities to fund their operations and exert control over local populations. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons aggravated the situation, making it easier for criminal groups to carry out their activities with impunity (Abubakar, 2021). The government's response evolved to include military operations, airstrikes, and targeted attacks on bandit hideouts, but these measures have often been met with mixed results and allegations of human rights abuses (Asemota, 2021).

The impact of banditry on the Nigerian economy has been significant, with disruptions to agricultural activities, displacement of communities, and loss of lives and property leading to economic losses running into billions of Naira (Olatunji, 2021). The insecurity caused by banditry has also deterred investment, hindered development projects, and undermined social cohesion, further exacerbating poverty and inequality in affected regions Ezeani, (2020). Banditry has become a pressing issue in Nigeria, particularly in the northern regions, where various armed groups engage in criminal activities such as kidnapping, cattle rustling, and armed robbery (Adetula, 2021). The agitation of banditry in Nigeria stems from a complex interplay of socio-economic, political, and security factors. Marginalized communities with limited access to economic opportunities and basic services often resort to banditry as a means of survival (Oluwasegun, 2022). Additionally, weak governance structures, corruption, and porous borders contribute to the proliferation of banditry and exacerbate existing grievances within affected communities.

Extortion has now increased to be a common tactic employed by bandits to fund their operations and exert control over territories. Bandits frequently target vulnerable populations, including farmers, herders, and traders, demanding ransom payments, protection fees, or extortionate taxes (Umaru, 2021). Failure to comply with these demands often results in violence, including kidnappings, killings, and the destruction of property, further destabilizing affected areas (Ibrahim, 2021). The extortion of banditry in Nigeria not only poses a direct threat to the safety and livelihoods of individuals but also undermines economic activities and development efforts in affected regions. The government's response to the agitation and extortion of banditry in Nigeria has been multifaceted, including both security measures and socio-economic interventions. Security agencies have intensified operations against bandit groups, conducting raids, airstrikes, and targeted military operations to degrade their capabilities and disrupt their networks (Adebayo, 2021). Additionally, efforts to address the root causes of banditry, such as poverty, unemployment, and marginalization, are underway, with initiatives aimed at promoting economic empowerment, providing social services, and fostering community resilience (Obasi, 2022). However, challenges persist, including the need for improved coordination among security agencies, greater accountability in governance, and sustained efforts to address underlying

grievances and inequalities.

ASSESSMENT OF DAMAGES AND IMPLICATIONS OF BANDITRY IN NIGERIA

Banditry in Nigeria has emerged as a significant security challenge, particularly in the northern region of the country, where various armed groups engage in criminal activities such as cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, and armed robbery (Oluwasegun, 2021). The assessment of damages resulting from banditry encompasses both human and economic costs, with devastating implications for affected communities and the nation as a whole. One of the primary damages caused by banditry is the loss of lives and displacement of populations. Bandit attacks often result in casualties among civilians, security personnel, and perpetrators themselves, leading to a climate of fear and insecurity (Abdullahi & Hussaini, 2020). Additionally, the violence perpetrated by bandits forces many individuals and families to flee their homes, seeking refuge in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps or neighboring communities, further exacerbating humanitarian crises (Umaru, 2020).

Furthermore, banditry undermines socio-economic development and stability in affected regions. The disruption of agricultural activities due to insecurity prevents farmers from cultivating their lands, leading to food shortages and economic losses (Muhammad, 2021). Moreover, the targeting of schools and educational institutions by bandits hampers access to education for children, perpetuating cycles of poverty and underdevelopment (Ibrahim, 2022). In addition to human costs, banditry inflicts substantial economic damages on businesses and infrastructure. Attacks on commercial vehicles, markets, and businesses disrupt trade and commerce, hindering economic growth and prosperity (Adebayo, 2021). Moreover, the destruction of critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and telecommunications networks undermines connectivity and impedes access to essential services, further marginalizing affected communities (Onyedika, 2021).

The implications of banditry extend beyond immediate security concerns to broader socio-political ramifications. The inability of the government to effectively address the root causes of banditry and provide security for its citizens erodes public trust in state institutions and governance (Ikechukwu et al., 2020). This erosion of trust fuels social discontent and undermines efforts to foster national cohesion and unity,

posing long-term challenges to Nigeria's stability and democratic governance (Obasi, 2021). Moreover, banditry exacerbates existing ethno-religious tensions and communal conflicts in Nigeria. Some bandit groups operate along ethnic or religious lines, targeting specific communities perceived as rivals or adversaries (Bala, 2020). These inter-communal tensions further polarize society and fuel cycles of reprisal attacks, perpetuating a cycle of violence and instability in affected regions (Ayoade & Afolabi, 2021). Additionally, banditry has significant implications for regional security and stability, particularly in the Sahel region. The porous borders between Nigeria and neighboring countries facilitate the movement of armed groups, weapons, and illicit goods, creating challenges for regional

security cooperation and counter-terrorism efforts (Yakubu, 2022). The spillover of violence from Nigeria into neighboring countries exacerbates regional insecurity and undermines efforts to promote peace and stability in the broader Sahel region (Ojo, 2021).

Addressing banditry requires a comprehensive approach that combines security measures with efforts to address underlying socio- economic grievances, promote good governance, and strengthen regional cooperation. Failure to effectively tackle banditry not only threatens the lives and livelihoods of Nigerian citizens but also undermines the country's stability, development, and regional security.

Table 1: Recent Incidences of Banditry in Nigeria's Northwest Region

S/No	Newspaper	Reporter(s)	Dates of Publication	Nature and Place of Attack	Causalities
1	The Punch	Gbenro Adeoye	March 31, 2018	Bandits attacked Bawan Daji village of Anka LGA of Zamfara State and killed over 30 people	Over 30 people were killed
2	The Nation	The Nation	March 1, 2019	21 killed in Kawaye village in Bagega community of Anka LGA of Zamfara State	16 people were killed and 40 others got abducted
3	The Punch	The Punch	June 9, 2019	25 killed in bandit attacks in Klahu, Tsage and Geeri villages in Rabah LGA of Sokoto State	25 people were killed

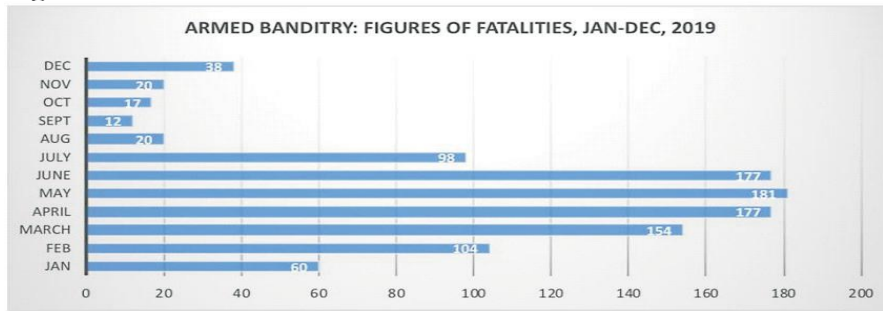
4	The Punch	Olaide Oyelude	July 4, 2019	11 killed in bandit attacks on Kankara and Danmusa LGA of Katsina State	11 people were killed
5	The Nation	The Nation	August 19, 2019	Four villagers were killed in banditry attacks in Tsayu village of Jibiya LGA of Katsina State	Death of 4 villagers
6	The Punch	Maiharaji Altine	January 17, 2020	Zamfara bandit kill 31 persons in attacks at Babban Rafi Village in Gummi LGA and Makosa Village in Zurmi LGA of Zamfara State	Death of 31 persons
7	Nigerian Tribune	Muhammed Sabiu	March 2, 2020	Bandits kill 50 people in villages in Igabi and Giwa LGA of Kaduna State	50 people were killed while

Source: Musharafa (2022)

A fresh crisis is arising in the northwest of Nigeria due to the continuous actions of armed organizations known as "bandits" in six states: Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Kaduna, Niger, and Kebbi. Attacks have included murdering and shooting, rape, abduction, rustling livestock, burning whole villages, and stealing goods. The number of victims and displaced persons has also kept rising. Although the six states had over 1,100 fatalities in 2018, over 2,200 in 2019, and over 1,600 between January and June 2020, additional deaths were reported (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020). Approximately 160,000 people had been domestically displaced by these assaults by September 2019; moreover, approximately 41,000 individuals have become refugees (World Food Programme, 2019; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2019). Currently, there are over 60,000 refugees and approximately 247,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) (Selim, 2020).

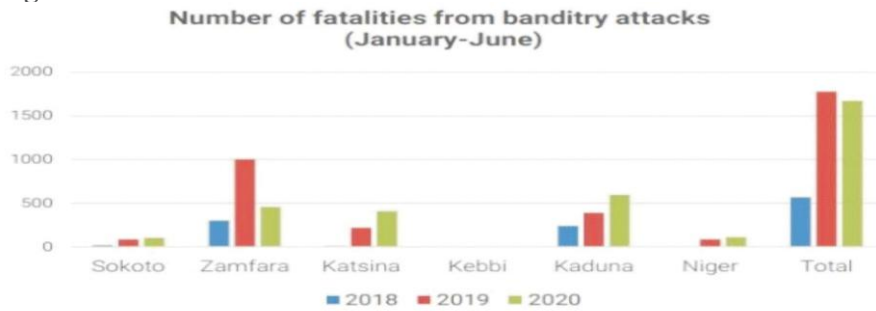
Figure 1 and 2 below provide an overview of the number of banditry assault deaths from January to December 2019 and January to June 2020, respectively.

Fig 1



Source: West African Network for Peacebuilding, 2020

Fig 2



Sources: Council on Foreign Relations, 2020; Chart: ACAPS

IMPLICATIONS OF BANDITRY IN NIGERIA ON SECURITY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 1. Disruption of Social Cohesion:** Banditry in Nigeria undermines social cohesion by instilling fear, fostering mistrust among communities, and disrupting traditional ways of life (Okonkwo, 2023). The breakdown of social bonds hampers collective efforts for development and creates a sense of insecurity among the population.
- 2. Economic Impact and Development:** The economic implications of banditry include loss of productivity, destruction of infrastructure, and diversion of resources towards security measures rather than development projects (Ibrahim, 2021). The persistent threat of banditry deters investments, hampers economic growth, and deepens poverty in affected regions.

3. **Insecurity and Humanitarian Crises:** Banditry contributes to insecurity, displacement of populations, and humanitarian crises in Nigeria (Nwosu, 2022). The violence and instability caused by criminal activities exacerbate the vulnerability of communities, leading to internal displacement, food insecurity, and limited access to essential services.
4. **Impact on Governance and Rule of Law:** Banditry undermines governance structures and the rule of law by eroding public trust in institutions, fostering corruption, and weakening the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies (Adams & Osakwe, 2023). The inability to address banditry effectively undermines the legitimacy of the state and hampers efforts to promote good governance.
5. **Regional Instability and International Relations:** The implications of banditry extend beyond Nigeria's borders, impacting regional stability and international relations (UN Security Council, 2020). Transnational criminal networks fueled by banditry pose challenges to security cooperation among neighboring countries and require coordinated efforts to address cross-border criminal activities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, understanding the evolution of banditry in Nigeria and its implications for security and development is essential for formulating effective strategies to address this challenge. Banditry in Nigeria has deep historical roots and is driven by socio-economic inequalities, governance failures, and arms proliferation. By strengthening law enforcement and security measures, addressing socio-economic grievances, promoting good governance and rule of law, enhancing community resilience and conflict resolution mechanisms, and addressing arms proliferation and cross-border trafficking, Nigeria can mitigate the impact of banditry on security and development and work towards building a more peaceful and prosperous future for all its citizens.

Furthermore, it is imperative for Nigeria to adopt a holistic and multi-dimensional approach that integrates security, development, and governance

strategies to effectively tackle banditry and its implications. By addressing the underlying socio-economic grievances, strengthening governance institutions, and enhancing community resilience, Nigeria can mitigate the impact of banditry on security and development and foster a more stable and inclusive society for generations to come. The agitation and extortion of banditry in Nigeria present significant challenges to the country's security, stability, and development. Addressing this composite issue requires a holistic approach that combines robust security measures with efforts to tackle underlying socio-economic factors and strengthen governance institutions. By addressing the root causes of banditry and enhancing security and resilience at the community level, Nigeria can mitigate the impact of this phenomenon and work towards building a more secure and prosperous future for all its citizens. In this regard the following recommendations are pertinent:

1. **Strengthen law enforcement and security measures:** Enhancing the capacity of security agencies to prevent, detect, and respond to banditry is essential. This includes improving intelligence gathering, surveillance, and border control to disrupt bandit networks and prevent their activities. Additionally, there should be efforts to enhance collaboration and information-sharing among security agencies at the local, national, and regional levels to coordinate responses effectively.
2. **Address underlying socio-economic grievances:** Addressing the root causes of banditry requires comprehensive socio-economic interventions aimed at reducing poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion. This includes implementing targeted poverty alleviation programs, promoting inclusive economic growth, and providing access to education, healthcare, and basic services in marginalized communities. Empowering local populations and addressing disparities in resource distribution can help reduce the susceptibility of individuals to recruitment and exploitation by bandit groups.
3. **Promote good governance and rule of law:** Strengthening governance institutions and promoting transparency, accountability, and rule of law are crucial for addressing governance failures that contribute to banditry. This involves combating corruption, improving public service delivery, and enhancing access to justice for all citizens. Efforts to build trust between the government and communities, particularly in conflict-affected areas, are essential for fostering social cohesion and resilience against banditry.
4. **Enhance community resilience and conflict resolution mechanisms:** Empowering communities to resist and mitigate the impact of banditry requires strengthening local governance structures and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. Engaging with community leaders, religious institutions, and civil society

organizations can help build trust, foster dialogue, and promote reconciliation among rival groups. Investing in community-based initiatives for peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and resilience- building can enhance community cohesion and reduce vulnerability to banditry.

5. **Address arms proliferation and cross-border trafficking:** Combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and curbing cross-border trafficking are essential for reducing the capacity of bandit groups to perpetrate violence and expand their operations. This requires enhancing regional cooperation and implementing effective arms control measures, including border security, arms monitoring, and disarmament initiatives. Strengthening partnerships with neighboring countries and international organizations can help address the transnational dimensions of arms trafficking and mitigate its impact on banditry and insecurity in Nigeria.

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