JOURNAL OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE
ISSN Print: 2992-2763 – ISSN Online: 2992-4618 | Vol. 2, Issue 3, No. 1 / September 2024
https://www.jopd.com.ng

POLITICS OF SECURITY AND ARMED BANDITRY: A CONJECTURAL EXPLORATION OF DISPOSITION AND POLICY DIRECTION OF STATECRAFT IN NORTH-WEST, NIGERIA

Iseoluwa Raphael OLAYINKA
olayinkair@tasued.edu.ng; olayinkaiseoluwa@gmail.com
&
Gafar Idowu AYODEJI, LL.B, Ph.D
ayodejigi@tasued.edu.ng
&
Asimiyu Olayinka ADENUGA
Adenugaao@tasued.ng
&
Ibrahim Oladayo, YUSUF
oladayoyusuf3@gmail.com
Department of Political Science,
Tai Solarin University of Education,
Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The paper interrogates how the disposition of the political elite in conducting state affairs in Nigeria impacts the upsurge of armed banditry and the capacity of the state apparatus to curtail the menace in Nigeria. The study adopted the desk research method by gathering necessary information through government policy statements and publications (text, journals, online new channels, and articles), while the greed and grievance hypothesis was employed as a framework for analysis. The study posits that prebendal conduct, which is a never-ending battle among the ruling elite to protect primordial interests, is the manifestation of governance failure leading to the collapse of the national security architecture in Nigeria. It further contends that prebendal conduct, governance failure, and the security vacuum are being exploited by criminal bandits by leveraging the subsisting greed in the statecraft to unleash their grievances. Thus, the duo of greed and grievances has manifested in various categories of banditry, ranging from mass abductions, killing of innocent citizens, demoralisation of the security personnel, commodification and commercialisation of banditry, resurgence of bandit groups, and huge expenditure on security. The paper concludes that armed banditry will continue to flourish because the ruling elite perceive peace as the absence of overt violence and hostility, as well as its failure to comprehend people's travail and structural inequalities as not just a kind of violence but also a key motivator of violent conflict. It recommended the deviation of the Nigerian security forces from their age-long tactics of fighting force with more force and focussing on building trust with communities vulnerable to attacks by bandits, while a structural alignment of the Nigerian state with its society should be a long-term riposte to the menace.

Keywords: armed banditry, governance failure, statecraft, policy direction, politics of security

Introduction

Every human society has various levels of criminal tendencies, causal-factor, as well as institutional capabilities to address the threat. Apart from the fact that this emphasises that

security threats in states differ, it could also be indicators that distinguish stable states from fragile ones. Nigeria, despite being one of the prosperous Africa countries, is ranked 16th of the 193 countries of the world; 2nd among the 54 countries in Africa and 1st among the 15 West African Countries with the highest crime rate in the world, with about 64% of crime index (Global Organised Crime Index, 2023). Thus, the country is faced with high levels of crime, violence and poor national security. Little wonder, it was ranked third in the global terrorism index in 2020 (Statista, 2021; World Population Review, 2021). The manifestations of the aforementioned crime index are cases of ethno-religious crises, militancy, terrorism, banditry, among other crimes such as rape, robbery, theft, murder, riots, and arson which the countries is grabbling with. Several studies have alluded to the causes of the manifestation of this crime related activities to poverty, politics of bitterness, ethno-religious wise, economic inequalities, political marginalisation, drug abuse, among others (Jarquin, & Hold stock 2002; Net-News Ledger, 2019; Stewart,). The aforementioned factors vary from political, economic, and social to psychological reasons. This indicates that identifying and addressing security concerns in any country cannot be done independently. It necessitates a comprehensive strategy that includes an examination of all societal subsystems as well as other aspects of security.

Considering Nigeria's security architecture since 1999, it could be observed that several administrations that have governed the country in the Fourth Republic have been faced with one security challenge different from the other. The Obasanjo Administration was confronted with ethno-religious militancy, Yaradua administration had to contend with between ethno-religious crises, militancy and terrorism, Goodluck administration was confronted with terrorism and banditry, while the Buhari and Tinubu administration battled with banditry, separationist agitators, amidst other aforementioned security challenges (African News, 2024; Awa, 2020; Yhan, 2007). However, the spate at which banditry has thrived in the last few decades has become a major source of worry. Information provided by Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (as cited in Ojewale, 2024) revealed that there are over 30,000 bandit groups operating in the north-west region, consisting of 10 to 1,000 members who engage in variants of criminal activities such as rape, kidnapping, massacre, and cattle rustling, among others. The activities of the aforementioned groups have resulted in the loss of 13,485 lives and the displacement of 1,087,875 people from their place of residence.

The variations in the type of security challenges peculiar to each of the aforementioned administrations, the evolvement of this security issues and the level of containment single out statecraft as an integral part of national security architecture. Statecraft in this context connotes the motive, idiosyncrasy, disposition and behaviour of political leaders towards conducting state affairs (Buller & James, 2012). In light of this, the question of how Nigeria's political leadership conducts state affairs affects the rise in armed banditry and the ability of the state machinery to contain the threat in the country's northwest is addressed in the study

Conceptualisation of the nexus between Statecraft, Politics of Security and National Security in Contemporary Human Society

The relationship between security and statecraft governance stems from the nature of humanity prior to the emergence of pre-modern states, the state's origin and development, the fundamentals of governance, and the function of state institutions in upholding social order.Anarchy characterized the pre-modern state, which proponents of the social contract theory believed to be the natural condition. However, in order to guarantee the safety of people and their property, collective security is necessary. Meanwhile, the rationale for the establishment of government stems from the need to grant the state the exclusive use of force

in order to uphold social order and civil obedience (Munro 2020; Ramaswamy, 2011; Urhie, 2014; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2005). This philosophical mandate gave constituted authorities ensure safety of citizens, their liberty and property and equally significantly give recognition to the impact of state.

In this sense, statecraft thus literally means the art or skill of managing government affairs (The Britannica Dictionary, 2024). Prantl and Evelyn (2022) distinguished clearly between statecraft and strategy, stating that the former is the art of establishing power and the latter is the art of ensuring the survival and prosperity of a sovereign state. Statecraft necessitates the formulation and implementation of strategies in the service of national interests. However, national security since the end of cold war has expanded beyond military security to include political, socio-cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions (Oktay, 2020; Kyle, 2018). Government involvement remains crucial in all aspects of national security, and various terms such as failed state, fragile state, and pariah state are used to describe governments that fail their social contract (Barma, 2016; Okolo & Agidii, 2018; Woodward, 2017; Robert, 2020). Also, public safety and national security are key parameters in evaluating government efficacy and state viability. Modern national security encompasses socio-political, military, food, social, job, environmental, information, energy, scientific and technological, health system, cyber, transport system, and media security (Rasim, Yadigar, Rasim & Ramiz, 2021).

To this effect, the Copenhagen School of Security Security Studies, through the work of Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, provides a framework for five sectors of analysis (military, political, economic, societal, and environmental), through which the politics of security as conceptual discourse emanates (Collins, 2007). The political dimension of security, according to the Copenhagen School of Security Studies, encompasses issues of governance, political stability, political legitimacy, regime change, internal conflicts that could lead to instability in a state or territory, power dynamics within and between nations, and other political indicators that impact security architecture. Inasmuch as there is a political dimension to security, it could be aptly said that there is a politics of security. From the aforementioned postulation, politics of security could be conceived as actions of both state and non-state actors coupled with interests, which in most cases are those that may degenerate into activities or events that may affect political security and consequently snowball into security threats.

According to Hyusmans (2016), the politics of insecurity are characterized by two fundamental concerns that typically center on debate: whether what is perceived as a security threat is objective or subjective, and how much political value it should possess. Manifestly, the degree of objectivity and subjective answers that politics and security give varies across political systems. While the politics of security is characterized by a certain degree of objectivity in most developed or liberal states, it is mostly subjective in developing or third-world nations. Takashi (2003) maintained that the prevalent distinction between internal and external security in the definition of political security and the attitude that external environments need to be changed to increase political security, with the internal status quo taken for granted, Substantiating the disparity between the aforementioned conceptual line of thought, Hassan (2015), within the context of a developed political system, conceived of political security as the protection of the people against any form of political oppression, government repression, human rights violations, threats from militarisation, and ill treatment, among others. In the same vein, The United States Legal System (n.d.) succinctly posits that political security is basically concerned with the question of whether people live in a society that honors their basic rights or not. On the other hand, Hyusmans (2016) characterizes the

politics of security as determining how much political priority the security problem deserves relative to other policy objectives. Patrick (2017) corroborates that political security still remains the most prominent dimension of security due to the overriding power of the political system to allocate values and make authoritative decisions that affect other dimensions of security, including the including the military dimension. Therefore, various interests in society, such as political, religious, ethnic, business, and economic interests, seek to override one another, just as actors within each of these spheres also strive to pursue interests that are detrimental to those of other actors within the same sphere. Thus, issues related to election, revenue allocation, cessation, military industrial complex, exploitation of national resources, state creation, media reportage, budgetary allocation, religious indoctrination, and proscription of political, ethnic, or religious groups are often regarded as high-stakes politics that could consequently result in security threats (Baylis, Smith, & Owens, 2017).

Based on this premise, several conflicting interests are knotted around national security in an attempt to ensure that actors whose interests negate constitutional provisions are shielded against the wrath of the law. This, however, raises the consciousness of political, economic, and ethno-religious elites on questions like: which tiers of government control national defense? Which ethnic group rules at the center? Who becomes president? Whose interest will the president serve (the elite or the masses)? Who is constitutionally empowered to appoint service chiefs? Who will the president appoint as the services chiefs, and from which religious or ethnic extraction? What should be the mode of recruiting or promoting military, police, and other paramilitary personnel? What ratio will come from a certain ethnic or religious group? How valid is the nomenclature of security threats in comparison to contending public perceptions? What amount of money should be allocated to the defense ministry from the national budget? Who benefits from the military industrial complex? These questions exemplify the extent to which political, economic, and ethno-religious elites try to influence national security architecture and security policies so as to favor their personal interests.

An Overview of Current Trends of Armed Banditry in Nigeria

The evolution of the contemporary armed banditry in Nigeria dates back to 2011, when the first criminal gang was formed by Kundun and Buharian in Zamfara (Ajibola, 2020). In recent time, banditry activities have spread across states like Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Kaduna, Kebbi, Niger, Benue, Kogi, Enugu, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti. among others. However, the activities of bandits are more prevalent in the North-western region of the country. Bandits working as a single cell from Zamfara increased from one to 120 groups in six states across the North-western region zone between 2011 and 2021. As a result, humanitarian crisis has worsened, and illegal acts such as murder, cattle rustling, kidnapping, rape, torching of entire villages, and looting of goods have increased, and the number of fatalities and displaced persons have risen sharply (Acap, 2020).

Between 2011 and 2021, over 12,000 lives were lost to bandits while 247,000 people was displaced from their places of habitation (Rufai, 2021). Acap(2020) and Asadu (2020) revealed the breakdown of fatalities and displacement by bandit operation between 2018 and 2021 as follows; 2018: Over 1,100 people were killed across six states, over 2,200 were killed in 2019, and more than 1,600 fatalities were recorded between January – June 2020 (Council on Foreign Relations 2020). By September 2019, such attacks had internally displaced over 160,000 people and produced more than 41,000 refugees. Displacement numbers were at over 247,000 IDPs and some 60,000 refugees in 2020: Anmensty International in 2020 revealed that bandits killed at least 1,126 villagers across Nigeria. In Zamfara alone, not fewer than 2,619 individuals have been slain in various bandit raids. A

total of 1,190 persons have been kidnapped across the state. Over 100,000 people were uprooted from their ancestral homes after 14,378 animals were rustled (Ajibola, 2020).

Theoretical Frameworks: Theory of Prebendalism and Greed/Grievance Hypothesis

The study adopts the prebendal theory and the greed and grievance hypothesis as explanatory frameworks to explore the nexus between state craft, politics of security and armed banditry in Nigeria. This is because the two theories capture; the evolution of the banditry and how statecraft deficit coupled with prebendalistic tendencies institutionalise it, thereby making it difficult to curtail the menace in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The greed-grievances theory as espoused by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffel (as cited in Mustafa, 2020) identified grievances and greed as underlying factors responsible for war or armed conflict in any human society. Grievances in this context, are regarded as reactionary response to inequality, discrimination, marginalisation and authoritarianism, while greed is motivated by opportunistic reasons, cost-benefit calculus, alternative income and risk associated with the activities related to exhibiting grievances. In the same vein, Ballentine and Nitzseke (as cited in Majeedullah, 2015), were of the view that economic motivations and opportunities are more highly correlated with the onset of conflict than ethnic, socio-economic and political grievances. For instance, banditry was driven by criminal intent to steal, plunder and the quest for accumulating economic wealth (Babaginda, 2021; Okoli ,2019). However, the region is known for its vulnerability and retarded human capital development, which are said to be the cumulative effect of poverty and high level of illiteracy. As rightly observed by the International Crisis Group (2020):

> The poverty rate of seven states in the zone is above the national average of 40.1 per cent, its inhabitant suffers from lack access to basic health care and clean water, while the immunisation coverage is far below national goals. Instead, the region is prominent for Arabic scholarship, apathy toward, and inadequate investment in, formal education over the decades amounting to 29.7 per cent literacy rate. Currently, it has the highest number of out-of-school children in Nigeria, including those who do not attend school at all, as alternative, millions of children are in the poorly resourced and ill-supervised Quranic school system, or almajiranci.

Another factor that could also uphold the assumption that greed and grievances are causal factors of armed banditry in the North west Region, is the claim that some of these bandits are dispossessed herders, pastoralist-farmers conflict warlords, cattle rustlers, gold miners or political thugs hired and armed by influential elite in the society (Ogbonnaya, 2020;Rufai, 2021**)**. In respect to this, many traditional rulers have lost their positions for aiding or abetting kidnapping in Zamfara state, just as some foreign mining companies have been indicted as main sources of arms supply, which have fostered the culture of arms renting, which enables bandits who cannot afford to purchase guns to hire (Blueprint, 2021 March 15; Komolafe, 2021).

Therefore, the symbiotic relationship between elite and bandit and the prebendal tendencies characterised by sense of entitlement to state resources, bond of fellowship between political elites machinery and bandits stimulates bandits to engage in this act, affects government stance in pronouncing banditry as a crime, as well as mapping out an approach to curtail the menace in the region. This however substantiates the assumption of the theory of prebendalism as espoused by Richard Joseph. The prebendalism theory assumes that public offices are considered to be an unrestrained opportunity for state officials, to generate material benefits for themselves, their constituents and kin groups (Joseph, 2014; Joseph,

2013; Onyia, 2020). Suberu (2013) opined that the theory revealed that constituent ethnicities are the bases for organisation, mobilization and legitimisation of ethno-clientelistic networks of patronage, corruption and rent seeking.Hassan (2021) and Rufai (2021) provide an experiential illustration to substantiate the theory's proposition. Hassan revealed that:

> Zamfara introduced an amnesty and a cash for guns scheme in 2016. Initially, it seemed to work, but it fell apart two years later with the death of warlord Buharin Daji, the lynchpin of the deal. Zamfara tried again in 2020. This time, the new governor, Bello Matawalle, offered cows in return for guns (to avoid monetising the violence), ordered the disarmament of the Yan Sakai, pledged to construct Rural Grazing Areas – settlements with dams and veterinary services set aside for pastoralists. But the attacks continued, and Matawalle made a U-turn in September, cancelling further dialogue.

On several occasions, the Federal Government of Nigeria has been called out by notable individuals and socio-political groups for its failure to name the sponsors of banditry, dissipate same energy paid out to restrain the activities of separatist like Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Movement for the Actualisation of Biafra (MASSOB) and Oduduwa Republic agitators in fighting bandits in the country (Opejobi, 2021; Johnson, 2021; Obajemu, 2021; Busari, 2018). Femi Falana, argued that it is clear that criminal elements who destroy government properties, release inmates, abduct unarmed citizens, kill or release them after collecting ransom in millions are terrorists (Olowologba, 2021).

Regardless of predisposing factors like the greed-grievance hypothesis or prebendalistic tendencies, the primary issue is a deficiency in statecraft. This leadership deficit and public misgovernance have led to state failure, resulting in economic stagnation, poverty, ungoverned spaces, unemployment, low human development, high illiteracy, nepotism, and weak political institutions, all contributing to banditry in Nigeria.

A Conjectural Exploration of Disposition and Policy Direction of Statecraft and Continued Spate of Banditry in in North-West, Nigeria

The trends in security challenges indicate that there is a significant relationship between the disposition of political leadership and approaches adopted by several administrations since the inception of Nigeria's Fourth Republic to date. To substantiate this postulation, Table 1 of the study highlights several administrations that have governed the country in the Fourth Republic, the nature**of insecurity, the reasons for the security threats and threats, and the approaches adopted to curtail these threats.**

Table 1: An Overview of Security Threats and Approaches Adopted by different administration in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Administration	Nature of Insecurity	Reason for Insecurity	Approaches Adopted
Obasanjo Administration (1999-2007)	Niger Delta Militancy and Ethnic & Religious Conflicts	The agitation for resource control and environmental justice in the oil-rich Niger Delta led to the rise of militant groups, including the Movement for the	Kinetic approach, where he addresses the Niger Delta via Military action and Non Kinectic of introducing developmental initiatives like the

		Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). 2. Frequent ethnic and religious clashes occurred, particularly in the Middle Belt region	Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC)
Yar'Adua Administration (2007-2010)	Niger Delta Militancy and Boko Haram Insurgency	1.The region remained volatile with ongoing attacks on oil installations and kidnappings. 2. The extremist group Boko Haram began its violent campaign during this period.	Non Kinetic approach of giving an amnesty program for Niger Delta militants, offering them financial incentives, training, and reintegration into society
Jonathan Administration (2010-2015)	Boko Haram Insurgency and the rise of banditry	1. Boko Haram grew more violent, capturing territories and declaring a caliphate in parts of northeastern Nigeria. 2. Increasing incidents of banditry, particularly in the northwest, posed new security challenges.	Kinectic approach and Non Kinectic where President jonathanlauched several military offensives against Boko Haram and Declared a state of emergency in the worst-affected states to intensify counter-insurgency efforts
Buhari Administration (2015-2023)	Boko Haram Insurgency, Farmer-Herder Conflicts and Banditry and Kidnappings	1. Boko Haram and its splinter group, ISWAP, remain active. 2. Increasing violence between herders and farmers, particularly in the Middle Belt. 3. Surge in banditry and kidnappings for ransom, especially in the northwest and central regions	Kknectic and Nonkinectic approach of bolstering the military with better equipment and training and initiative aimed at rehabilitating and reintegrating repentant Boko Haram members.

Source: Authors Compilation (2024)
Compiled from: *African News* (2024, May 25); *Punch Editorial Board* (2023, May 21); Are (2023, May 21); *The New Humanitarian* (2004, October 1st)**.**

This implies that the perceptions of the elite on contending security threats and the language and imagery used to characterise them. These perceptions, in turn, shape the approaches and policy choices made to address these security challenges. Within, the context of banditry, the argument regarding the nomenclature of banditry and most suitable terminology to be used when talking about "bandits" in Nigeria reflects disagreements about social justice,

governance, and criminality in the nation's multicultural setting. While some elites such as; Rotimi Amaechi, Kayode Fayemi; Abubakar Malami; Yemi Osinbajo; Tukur Muhammad-Baba; Femi Adesina; Muhammad Abubakar; David Umahi; Wole Soyinka and Femi Falana, strongly support labelling these individuals as criminals and pushing for strict law enforcement measures. On the other hand, others Sheikh Ahmad Gumi, Sani Yerima, Junaid Mohammed, Aisha Yesufu, Balarabe Musa, Lai Mohammed, El-Rufai, Ibrahim Shekarau, Oby Ezekwesili, among others has vehemently raised reservation against labelling perpetrators of banditry understanding underlying socio-economic factors stimulating their illicit act. For instance, Sheik Gumi maintained that if the Nigerian authorities talk to the bandits in a nice wordings, they are ready to put their weapons down and adhere to the demand of the state, but when the tone of state bureaucrats is harsh or the government adopt stringent against their illicit activities, they will not desist from unleashing terror on the state (Adewole, 2021). Similarly, Lai Mohammed and El-Rufai argue that bandits do not threaten Nigeria's sovereignty, unlike Southern separatist agitators, a stance criticized by both Northern and Southern elites and various socio-cultural groups. (Ndujihe, Akinrefon, Duru, Jannamike& Hassan, 2021; Johnson, 2021; Obajemu, 2021). Thus, the disparities in the line of thought restrain the realisation of a unanimous perception of what banditry is and how best it can be tackled.

Another manifestation of the impact of statecraft on the effort to combat banditry in the North-West region is the degree of synergetic relations between the central government and other federating units, most especially the government of the North-West region, which happens to be a hotbed of banditry in Nigeria. Apart from the inadequacies of Schedule II, Part I of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999), which exclusively make the armed forces, police, and prisons accountable to the Federal Government, State governors in the northwest region have accused the federal government of making the anti-banditry war difficult with its conflicting kinetic and non-kinetic stances. Governor Dauda Lawal of Zamfara had accused the Federal Government of Nigeria, under the leadership of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, of sabotaging the ongoing fight against banditry in the state by negotiating with bandits without the knowledge of the state government (*Vanguard, September 30, 2023*).

Even in the North West region, state governors have failed to develop their own model for combating banditry in their individual states; instead, they alternately accept and reject whether to use a kinetic or non-kinetic method. For instance, the Kaduna state government has recurrently criticised the Nigerian Federal Government under the leadership of Goodluck Jonathan (Peoples Democratic Party) for not negotiating with abductors of the Chibok girls in 2016. When he was a member of the opposition party (All Progressive Congress), maintaining negotiation with criminals is non-negotiable when the lives of the citizens are at stake. In contrast, he vehemently denounced the necessity of negotiating with bandits in March and April 2021, when gunmen abducted 39 students of the Federal College of Forestry Mechanisation in Mando in Kaduna State's Igabi Local Government Area and 23 students of Greenfield University, located along the Kaduna-Abuja Highway in Kasarami, Chikun LGA (Aworinde, 2021; Olafusi, 2021). Regardless of the fact that five of these students and a staff member of the school were killed, he still holds on to the use of the kinetic approach, stating that the death of the victims is a price that must be paid. He stressed that banditry in the state is war, and there will always be collateral damage in war; thus, it is better to pay through this means rather than making financial inducement, because paying money has not solved the problem anywhere in the world (Aworinde, 2021).

Similarly, while Senator Ibrahim Gobir of the All Progressive Congress in Sokoto State criticised the state government's decision, led by Aminu Tambuwal, to negotiate with the bandits in the state, the state government maintained that this decision was motivated by the Federal Government's inability to provide security for the state (Nimi, 2022).

This implies that there is a clear dichotomy between the disposition of most states and their stance on issues related to national security, most especially when it has to do with commendation and condemnation of members of the opposition party.

Statecraft failure and its effects on viability of National Security towards curbing banditry in Northern Nigeria

Demoralisation of security personel: The amnesty programme and deradicalisation policy and other non-kinetic approach adopted by the Nigerian Government have the potential of watering down the morale of military personnel, the police and other relevant stakeholders involved in the counter insurgency war in the country. It is worth noting that, in an effort to take a non-military approach to fighting insurgency, the Nigerian government launched Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) in 2016, a counter-insurgency programme aimed at rehabilitating and reintegrating low-risk Boko Haram fighters, which includes vocational training, deradicalization, and civic programmes (Irede, 2021). According to Adesokan, (2021), The Nigerian Army claimed to have rehabilitated 893 ex-Boko Haram members since 2019, while the Nigerian Identity Management Commission claimed to have registered over 900 repentant Boko Haram members in the country. The implementation of the initiatives take place amid allegations of poor treatment of armed personnel, ex-millitary men, family of deceased millitary officers, lack of adequate equipment to confront perpetrators of crime, among others (Adesokan, 2021; Chiejina, 2022). By implication, this could send a wrong signal to security personnel and become a yardstick for them to measure the extent to which the nation values their service and the lives of their colleagues who became casualties of counter-insurgency missions in the country.

Commodification and Commercialisation of Banditry: The inability of the Nigerian state to curtail the excesses of bandits and other related crimes in Nigeria, has transformed the act from a mere criminal activity to pure economic activity for accumulating more wealth. For instance, past occurrence revealed that ransom money demanded by the bandits now fall between 30 million and 200 million naira, depending on the number of people abducted and their class within the society. In another development, these bandits have also included low-income earners in their commodification plan. In Northern states like Kaduna and Zamfara bandit now demand “harvest fees" from farmers. Farmers are denied harvesting until they pay between N900,000 and 1million Naira (about $2,400-3,000 per Village (Vanguard News, December 13, 2021; Arise News, November 13, 2020).

Thus, illicit activities like kidnapping now has a price tag, while banditry in its entirety posseses a market value with quantifiable input and output value. In view of this, it has been considered to be one of the criminal lucrative sectors to invest, thereby leading to persistent increase in the number of armed groups in the country.

Resurgence of more Bandits Groups: The numbers of armed groups and their activities in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, have increased. According to Rufai (2021), the first criminal gang that was formed by bandits in Kundun and Buharian in 2011, operating as a single cell from Zamfara, but it has grown from one to 120 gangs, across six states in Northern, Nigeria.

Huge Security Spending: Since the inception counter terrorism operation in Nigeria, large percentage of the nation's budget has been allocated to the defence ministry in a bid to curtail terrorist activities and other security challenges like pastoralist farmers’ conflicts, kidnapping, banditry, and armed robbery, and others. This has however affected other sectors of the economy like health, education, agriculture, works, social infrastructure, science and

technology, commerce trade and industry among others. Despite huge security expenditure, insecurity still remains unabated in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. According to the Sunday Vanguard's (as cited in Ndujihe 2018; Baiyewu, 2019; Punch News, October 29, 2019):

> The Defence in 2008 got N444.6 billion (20.09%), ; 2009, N233 billion(7.64%), 2010-N264 billion (5.03%), 2011-N348 billion (7.0%), 2012-N921.91 billion (18.90%), 2013-N1.055 trillion (21.16%). In 2014, Defence chalked up N968.127 billion (19.51%), N388.459 billion (7.67%) in 2015, 2016-N429.128 billion (7.08%), 2017-N465.87 billion (6.26%), 2018, N580.145 billion (6.26%,) 159.13 billion was allocated in 2019, 100 billion (6.82) in 2020was allocated to the Defence ministry in 2019 and 2020.

Loss of Millitary Personnel and Equipment: The increase in bandits attacks and effort to reinvigorate the country's counter insurgency strategy, have led to loss of huge resources both human and material resources. In 2021, over 107 men of the Nigerian Army, Police and other security agencies became causualities in various bandits' attacks of which 82 were recorded dead, 24 injured and 1 was recorded to be missing (Ayitogo; 2021; Ibrahim, 2021; Abubakar, 2021; Umar, 2021; Nasir &Ebije, 2021; Garda World, September 16; 2021; Reuters, 2021; Channels TV, April 12 2021). Similarly, the Alpha Jet Aircraft being used by men of the Nigerian Airforce was said to have been shot down by Bandits, while returning from a successful air interdiction mission between the boundaries of Zamfara and Kaduna states (Omonobi, 2021).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper contends that statecraft deficiencies have led to the continued surge of banditry in northwestern Nigeria. This is manifested by disparities in the dispositions of the political elite and state bureaucracy, which have influenced the conduct of state affairs on security-related issues. This has had a considerable impact on what terms are used to describe banditry, their perception of the level of harm it posed to civilians, and the most effective strategies for dealing with the menace. The paper argued that the aforementioned lacuna is the result of security politics, which are influenced by prebendal conduct, greed and grievance tendencies, religious inclination, social affinity, and economic benefits, among other primordial sentiments that have affected objectivity in the course of addressing the threat. Consequently, this has posed a significant threat to the country's security architecture, thereby resulting in demoralisation of the country's security personnel, huge security spending, commodification of banditry, and resurgence of new bandit groups, among others. The study comes to the conclusion that armed banditry will persist because the ruling class views peace as the absence of implicit hostility and violence and because it fails to recognize that structural inequality and the suffering of people are not only instances of violence but also important drivers of violent conflict.

In view of this, the paper recommends the need to establish a think-thank committee comprised of the representatives of the federal, state, and local governments, communities affected by banditry, religious leaders' representative of all security agencies and non-state security architecture in the region, and academics from disciplines such as sociology, psychology, public policy, political science, peace and conflict relations experts, and defence and strategist experts. This essence of this enables them to brainstorm from time to time so as to advise the government on the most suitable approach to adopt in the situation at hand. This will also give room for the adoption of a holistic approach or bottom-top approach in addressing the banditry in the region.

Also, there is the need to use drones and other technological devices to conduct surveillance operations in the Northwest, most especially in thick forests and other ungoverned spaces. In conclusion, there should be a greater pro-active effort between Nigeria and its neighbours so as to tighten border security, contain illegal migration, and also prevent he free flow of small and light weapons.

References

Abraham, S.O. & Auwalu, A. (2022). Rural banditry and the crisis of peace-building in Northern Nigeria.*International Digital Organization for Scientific Research, 7(*1), 9-17.

Abubakar, A.M. (2021, October 2). Bandits kill two soldiers, injure 12 others in attack on Niger community – Governor. *Premium Times.* https://www.premiumtimesng.com /news /headlines/487838-bandits-kill-two-soldiers-injure-12-others-in-attack-on-niger-community-governor.html

Acaps (2020). Nigeria: Banditry violence and displacement in the Northwest. *Acaps*. https://www.acaps.org/special-report/nigeria-banditry-violence-and-displacement-northwest

Adedeji, A. (2021, January 8). The growing threat of armed banditry in North-West Nigeria. *Strife.*https://www.strifeblog.org/2021/01/08/the-growing-threat-of -armed-banditry-in-north-west-nigeria/

Adesokan, K. (2021, November 19). Special Report: Widows of Nigerian soldiers suffer amidst official neglect. Premium Times.

Adewole, S. (2021). Don't address bandits as criminals, says Sheikh Gumi. https://punchng.com/dont-address-bandits-as-criminals-says-sheikh-gumi/

African News (2024). Nigeria: insecurity, burning file of the new president Tinubu, https://www.africanews.com/2023/05/26/nigeria-insecurity-burning-file-of-the-new-president-tinubu//

Ajibola, A. (2021, April 2). 2,619 killed, 1,190 abducted by bandits since 2011 In Zamfara – Govt. *Channels TV.*https://www.channelstv.com/2021/04/02/2619-killed-1190-abducted-by-bandits-since-2011-in-zamfara-govt/amp/

Akinkuotu, E. Angbulu, S. George, G. & Ani, P. (2021, July 11). Major police tracking equipment down, detectives struggle to trace bandits, others. *Punch Newspaper.*https://www.google.com/amp/s/punchng.com/major-police-tracking-equipment-down-detectives-struggle-to-trace-bandits-others/%3famp

Akinrefon, D. Duru, P. Iheamnachor, D. (2021, March 25). Bandits are displaced herdsmen-Miyetti Allah. *Vanguard News.* https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/03/ bandits-are-displaced-herdsmen-miyetti-allah/amp/

Alao, A. (2021, February 26). Gumi: Don't call bandits criminal or else. *The Nation Newspaper.*https://www.thenationonlineng.net/gumi-dont-call-bandits-criminals-or-else/amp/

Appadorai, A. (Eds) (2004). *The substance of politics.* Oxford University Press.

Are, J. (2023, May 21). Jonathan: Insecurity gave me sleepless nights when I was president. *The Cable.* **https://www.thecable.ng/jonathan-insecurity-gave-me-sleepless-nights-when-i-was-president/**

Arise News (2020, November 13). Harvest fees' the new norm as bandits terrorise farmers in Northern Nigeria. *Arise TV*. https://www.arise.tv/harvest-fees-the-new-norm-as-bandits-terrorise-farmers-in-northern-nigeria/

Asadu, C. (2020, August 24). Amnesty: Bandits have killed 1,100 Nigerians in 2020. *TheCable*. https://www.thecable.ng/amnesty-bandits-have-killed-1100-nigerians-in-2020/amp/

Aworinde, T. (2021, August 29). Banditry El-rufai's changing-tune-on-negotiation

Ayitogo, N. (2021, July 6). Exclusive: Bandits ambush Nigerian troops, kill seven soldiers, injure five others. *Premium Times*. Retrieved from https://www.premiumtimesng.com /news/headlines/471996-exclusive-bandits-ambush-nigerian-troops-kill-seven-soldiers-injure-five-others.html

Babaginda, M. (2021, September 21). Banditry: Residents of North-west states reluctantly embrace stringent measures as governors unite. *Premium Times*. *https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/nwest/484365-banditry-residents-of-north-west-states-reluctantly-embrace-stringent-measures-as-governors-unite.html*

Barma, N. H. (2016, May 17). Failed state. *Encyclopedia Britannica.*https://www.britannica.com/topic/failed-state

Baylis, J., Smith, S. & Owens, P. (2017). Globalization of world politics (1st ed). Oxford: Oxford university press.

Bello, B., & Abdullahi, M.M. (2021) Farmers-herdsmen conflict, cattle rustling and Banditry: The dialectics of insecurity in Anka and Maradun Local Government Area of Zamfara State, Nigeria. *SAGE Open, 11(4)*, 1-12.

Buhari, K. (2018, January 18). Herdsmen crisis: Fulani tackles Buhari, accuses President of impunity. *Premium Times.* https://www.premiumtimesng.comnews/top-news/256046-herdsmen-crisis-fulani-tackles-buhari-accuses-president-of-impunity/

Chandler Good Government Index (2021). Country rankings. *Chandler Government Index.* https://chandlergovernmentindex.com/country-rankings//

Channels TV (2021, April 12). Nigeria army buries Captain, 11 Soldier killed by Bandits in Benue State. Channels TV. https://www.channelstv.com

Chiejina, N. (2022, January 6). War veterans protest unpaid 24-month pension arrears. The Nation Newspaper. https://thenationonlineng.net/war-veterans-protest-unpaid-24-month-pension-arrears/

Ewetan, O.O., &Urhie, E. (2014). Insecurity and socio-economic development in Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Development Studies,5(1),* 40-63.

Fund for Peace (2021). Fragile state index. *FFP*. Retrieved from https://fragilestatesindex.org/frequently-asked-questions/what-does-state-fragility-mean/

Garda World (2021, September 17). Nigeria: Military confirms Sept. 16 militants killed 18 soldiers during ambush near Monguno, Borno State. *Garda World.* https://www.gardaworld.com/nigeria-military-confirms-sept-16-militants-killed-18-soldiers-during-ambush-near-monguno-borno-state/

Global Organised Crime Index (2023). Criminality. https://ocindex.net/2023/rankings/

Hassan, I. (2020, November 8). Nigeria's rampant banditry, and some ideas on how to rein it in. *The New Humanitarian.*https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis /2021/11/8/Nigeria-banditry-peace-deal-jihadists-how-to-rein-it-in/

Ibrahim, G.S. (2021, October 14). 5 soldiers killed in suspected bandits attack in Nigeria. *AA*. https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/5-soldiers-killed-in-suspected-bandits-attack-in-nigeria/2392126#

International Crisis Group. (2020). *Violence in Nigeria's Northwest: Rolling back the mayhem.* International Crisis Group.

Irede, A. (2021, August 31). Repent or Rescue: Nigeria's amnesty for terrorists re-opens old wounds. *The Africa Report.*https://www.theafricareport.com /123114/nigerias-amnesty-for-terrorists-re-opens-old-wounds/

Johnson, D. (2021, October 3). Leave Nmandi Kanu alone, face bandits, terrorist, Afenifere tells Buhari.*Vangaurd News.* https://www.vangaurdngr.com/2021/10/leave-nmandi-kanu alone-face-bandits-terrorist-afenifere-tells-buhari/

Joseph, R.A. (2013). Class, state and prebendal politics in Nigeria. *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, 25(3),* 21-38.

Joseph, R.A. (2014). *Democracy and prebendal politics in Nigeria:* The rise and fall of the Second Republic (Rev. ed). Cambridge: University Press.

Komolafe, K. (2021, September 21). Bandits and the force of ideas. *Thisday.* https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/09/15/bandits-and-the-force-of-ideas/

Kumolu, C. (2021b, August 1). Three deadly years: 1,868 Security men killed by Boko Haram – Tony Blair Institute Report. Vanguard.

Kyle, A. (2018). International security in post-Cold War era: A security evaluation. *Small War Journals.* https://www.smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/intenational-security-post-cold-war-era-security-evaluation

Majeedullah, A. (2015). Greed and Grievance: A tug of war between discourses.

Meriem-Webster Dictionary, (n.d). Statecraft. *Meriem-Webster Dictionary.* https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/statecraft

Munro, A. (2020, May 13). State of nature. *Encyclopedia Britannica*.https://www.britannica.com/topic/state-of-nature-political-theory/

Mustafa, K.S. (2020). The political economy of conflict: Greed versus grievance argument. *Medium Blog*.https://mks01.medium.com/the-political-economy-of-conflict-greed-versus-grievance/

Nasir, M.N. &Ebije, N. (2021, March 18). Bandits kill army officer, 5 others in Zamfara, lose 11 members. *Sun News.*https://www.sunnewsonline.com/bandits-kill-army-officer-5-others-in-zamfara-lose-11-members/

Nasiru, Z. (2020). Rising insecurity in Nigeria: Causes and solution. *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences, 19(4),* 1-11.

Nathaniel, S. (2021, September 1). Boko Haram: 11 questions trailing amnesty for repentant terrorists. *Channels TV Podcast*. https://www.channelstv.com/2021/09/01/boko-haram-11-questions-trailing-amnesty-for-repentant-terrorists/

Ndujihe, C., Akinrefon, D., Duru, P., Jannamike, L. & Hassan, I. (2021). Opposition to declaring bandits terrorists: ACF, MBF, Ohanaeze, Afenifere, CAN rain knocks on Gumi. *Vanguard News.*https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/10/opposition-to-declaring-bandits-terrorists-acf-mbf-ohanaeze-afenifere-can-rain-knocks-on-gumi/amp

Nextier SPD. (2021, February 22). Amnesty: Price for peace? *Nextier SPD. https://nextierspd.com/amnesty-price-for-peace/*

Nimi, P. (2022, November 29). Why we negotiate with bandits: Governor Tambuwal. https://gazettengr.com/why-we-negotiate-with-bandits-governor-tambuwal/

Obajemu, A. (2021, October 11). Terrorism: Pressure mounts on Buhari to name sponsors. *Business Hallmark.*https://www.hallmarknews.com/terrorism-pressure-mounts-on-buhari-to-name-sponsor/

Odinkalu, C.A. (2018, December 26). Banditry in Nigeria: A brief history of a long war. *The Cable*. https://thecable.ng/banditry-in-nigeria-a-brief-of-a-long-war/amp

Ogbonnaya, M. (2020, May 28). Mining and extractives: Illegal mining drives Nigeria's banditry and local conflicts. *Enact.* https://www.enactafrica/enact-obsrvers/illegal-mining-drives-nigerias-rural-banditry-and-local-conflicts

Okoli, C.A. (2019, September 12). What can be done to fight rural banditry in northern Nigeria? *Relief Web*. Retrieved https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/what-can-be-done-fight-rural-banditry-northern-nigeria/

Okolo, O.P., &Agidii, E.P. (2018). Governance failure and terrorism in Nigeria. *Ebsu Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 8(1)*, 65-78.

Oktay, E.T. (2020). Change of the security perception during the post-Cold War era. *South Security School.* https://www.gencdiplomatlar.com/defense-and-security/change-of-security-perception-of-the-post-colonial-cold-war-era.html

Okubote, C.O. (2013). *Great issues in governance.* Double Jod Limited.

Olafusi, E. (2021, April 4). Kaduna: Anyone claiming to negotiate with bandits on our behalf will be prosecuted. https://www.thecable.ng/kaduna-anyone-negotiating-with-bandits-on-our-behalf-will-be-prosecuted/

Olowologba, F. (2021, October 4). Buhari government waging war against IPOB, journalists-Falana. *Daily Post.* https://www.dailypost.ng/2021/10/04/buhari-government-waging-war-against-ipob-journalists-falana/

Oluwole, O. (2021, February 18). Rising insecurity in Northwest Nigeria: Terrorism thinly disguised as banditry. *Brookings*. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2021/02/18/rising-insecurity-in-northwest-nigeria-terrorism-thinly-disguised-as-banditry/amp/

Omonobi, K. (2021, July, 19). updated: Bandits shoot down NAF fighter jet in Zamfara; pilot rescued. *Vanguard News.*https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/07/updated-bandits-shoot-down-naf-fighter-jet-in-zamfara-pilot-rescued/

Onyia, F.O. (2020). Nepotism, cronyism and prebendalism: An exploration of mores that reinforce corruption in Nigeria's political system. *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration,8(3),* 1-13.

Opejobi, S. (2021, August 4). Buhari Government focusing on Nmandi Kanu, Sunday Igboho, ignoring bandits_ Sheu Sani. *Daily Post.*https://www.dailypost.ng/2021/08/04/buhari-govt-focus-on-nnamdi-kanu-sunday-igboho-ignoring-banditry-sheu-sani/%3famp=1

Ososona, T. (2021). New lords of Nigeria Northwest. *The Republic.*https://republic.com.ng/june-july-2021/new-lord-of-nigeria-north-west/

Otti, A. (2019, June 24). Illiteracy + Ignorance + Poverty = Banditry. *This day.* *https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2019/06/24/illiteracy-ignorance-poverty-banditry/*

Oyedeji, O. (2021, October 21). Imbalanced scales: Nigeria's high budgetary allocation to defence over 6 years is consistently, heavily recurrent. *Dataphyte.*https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/security/imbalanced-scales-nigerias-high-budgetary-allocation-to-defence-over-6-years-is-consistently-heavily-recurrent/%3famp_markup=1

Patrick, I. (2017). Cold war world. *The New Republic.*https://newrepublic.com/article/144998./cold-war-world-new-history-redefines-conflicts-true-extent-enduring-costs

Punch Editorial Board (2023, May 21). Buhari Years: Despite much rhetoric, insecurity triumphs. *Punch Newspaper.* ***https://punchng.com/buhari-years-despite-much-rhetoric-insecurity-triumphs/***

Ramaswamy, S. (Eds),(2015). *Political theory: Ideas and concepts.*PHI Learning Private Limited.

Rasim, M.A., Yadigar, N.I., Rasim, S.M. & Ramiz, M.A (2021). Information security as a national security components. *Information Security Journal: A Global Perspective, 30(1),* 1-18. DOI:10.1080/193933555.2020.1795323

Reuters (2022, September 27). Gunmen kill 22 Nigerian security personnel, says state lawmaker. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/nigerian-soldiers-repel-islamist-attack-suffer-casualties-military-2021-09-27/

Ripples Nigeria (2020, July 17). Gov. Matawalle to Bandits: Repent, surrender one riffle, and get two cows. *Ripples Nigeria.*https://www.ripplesnigeria.com/gov-matawalle-to-bandits-repent-surrender-one-riffle-get-two-cows/

Robert, H.D. (2008, July 2). Cold war roots of U.S. economic problems. *The Globalist.*https://www.theglobalist.com/cold-war-roots

Robert, L. (2020, July 27). What is a failed state? Definition and examples. *Thoughtco.* https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-a-failed-state-definition-and-examples-5072546

Rotbert, I.R. & Campbell, J. (2021,s May 21). Nigeria is a failed state. *Foreign Policy.*https://www.foreignpolicy.com/2021/05/27/nigeria-is-a-failed-state/

Rufai, M.A. (2021, September 9). *I am a Bandits: A decade of research in Zamfara State (Bandits Den).* Sokoto: Graphic Concept Academy.

Sahara Reporters *(*2021 July, 11). Nigeria Police equipment for tracking bandits, criminals not working since January. *Sahara Reporters.* http://saharareporters. com/2021/07/11/nigeria-police%E2%80%99s-equipment-tracking-bandits-criminals-not-working-january

Sambo, U. Damaturu, N. Sule, B. Deribe, A.U., Ahmad, A. (2020). The Impact of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in the Proliferation of Armed Group Conflicts in Northeastern Nigeria: Interrogating the Boko Haram Phenomenon. *Arts and Social Sciences* 6 (4), 151-161

Suberu, R.T. (2013). Prebendal Politics and Federal Governance in Nigeria. In: Adebanwi W., Obadare E. (eds) *Democracy and Prebendalism in Nigeria*. New York: Palgrave Macmillianhttps://doi.org/10.1057/9781137280770

The New Humanitarian (2004, October 1st). Obasanjo pledges to stem tide of militancy in oil-rich Delta. *The New Humanitarian.* *https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/report/51564/nigeria-obasanjo-pledges-stem-tide-militancy-oil-rich-delta*

Thomas, A.N. &Aghedo, I. (2014). Security Architecture and Insecurity Management: Context, Content and Challenges in Nigeria. *Sokoto Journal of Social Sciences* 4 (1), 22-36.

Uche, I. (2021, March 12). Nigeria's conflict and insecurity makes us rethink authority in ungoverned spaces. *LSE*. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2021/03/12/nigeria-conflict-insecurity-rethink-how-authority-policy-works-ungoverned-governance-spaces/

Umar, S. (2021, July 16). Bandits Kill 2 soldiers, abduct scores in Sokoto village raid. *Blueprint.*https://www.blueprint.ng/bandits-kill-2-soldiers-abduct-scores-in-sokoto-village-raid/

Vanguard (2023, September 30). Secret negotiations with bandits stop playing politics with our lives northern leaders warn FG Zamfara government *https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/09/secret-negotiations-with-bandits-stop-playing-politics-with-our-lives-northern-leaders-warn-fg-zamfara-govt/*

Vanguard News (2021, December 13). Panic grips Zamfara communities as gunmen demand over N1m levy. *Vanguard News*. https://www.vanguardngr.com/ 2021/12/panic-grips-zamfara-communities-as-gunmen-demand-over-n1m-levy/amp/

Woodward, S. (2017). Bibliography. *In The Ideology of Failed States: Why Intervention Fails* (pp. 255-300). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781316816936.009

Xan, R. (2009, August 6). Nigeria begins amnesty for Niger Delta militants. *The Guardian.*https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/aug/06/niger-delta-militants-amnesty-launched/