FUW-IJMSS
ISSN: 2635-3539 (Print)
2384-6224 (online)
Open Access
Google Scholar

OVERVIEW OF THE PERSISTENCE OF ARMED BANDITRY IN ZAMFARA STATE, NORTH WESTERN NIGERIA

[1]Suleiman Iguda LADAN and [2]Peter Peter UMEH
[1]Department of Basic and Applied Sciences
College of Science and Technology
Hassan Usman Katsina Polytechnic, Katsina, Katsina State
Corresponding Author email: suleimaniguda@hukpoly.edu.ng
GSM: 08169805626, 07083530491
[2]Department of Geography
Faculty of Social Sciences
Nigerian Army University.
Biu, Borno State.

Abstract
Banditry constitutes a major security challenge in the North West Geo-Political Zone. Notably, it leads to loss of lives, theft and destruction of properties, and impoverishment of the people through ransom payment. This study is an overview of the persistence of banditry in Zamfara State. The research methodology involved in the review is a documentary analysis of records of banditry incidences and measures adopted to counter it. The review findings have shown that the Federal and State Governments have adopted several measures to counter the banditry but it persists. The persistence is due to empty pronouncement of the Federal Government; inadequate border security forces, inadequate security personnel, a large number of bandit gangs, and the presence of collaborators and informants among others. Recommendations are offered on how to counter the banditry and end its menace in Zamfara State and the whole North West Region. The recommendations included that President Tinubu should be strong and decisive in tackling the persistent insecurity; adequate border security agents should be recruited for effective patrolling of the land's borders; adequate security forces should be recruited to provide the manpower needed to confront the bandits among others.
Keywords: Persistence, banditry, attack, security, Zamfara State, North West.

Introduction

Banditry is the occurrence or prevalence of armed robbery or violent crimes that are committed by outlaws in areas that have limited security presence such as the countryside or villages. Banditry involves the use of force and violence to threaten, extort, intimidate and or harass a person(s) with the intent to rob, kill, rape, steal, or snatch any valuable item (Madubuegwu & Abah,2023). Banditry is therefore characterized by depredation, robbery and abductions, rustling of cattle, extortion and or illegal taxation and toll collection from innocent citizens in a country, State or region (Mustapha, 2024). Banditry mostly thrives in areas or regions of a country where the government as an institution of State, governance or administration is absent or has failed in its primary responsibility of protecting the lives

and properties of its citizens (Abdulrahman and Akuva, 2020).

History has shown that banditry once existed in virtually all the continents of the world particularly in the 19th and 20th centuries (Ladan, 2024a). However, the combination of increase in security personnel and capital punishment for bandits has largely brought the menace under control in most of the continents. However, according to Dmella (2018), some ruminants of bandits still operate in present-day India despite continued anti-banditry efforts. In Haiti for example, armed gangs of criminals described as bandits have taken control of the streets and strategic positions within the capital city demanding the resignation of the President in March 2024. (TOI, 2024).

In West Africa, several factors have been responsible for the emergence of banditry as a contemporary security challenge in the sub-region. The factors include resource-based conflicts over land resources, porous borders, drug trafficking and abuse, illicit mining activities, inadequate security personnel, and proliferation of Small and Light Weapons (SALW) following the collapse of the administration of Colonel (Rtd) Muammar Gaddafi of Libya in 2011 (RN, 2020).

Rufa'i (2018) argued that some Fulani and Tuaregs from Mali and Niger Republic formed part of the early bandits that established criminal gangs in Nigeria and their members receive training around areas such as Birnin Gwari and Dansadau forests which connect Kaduna and Zamfara States to other North Western States down to some parts of Niger Republic.

The epicentre of banditry in Nigeria is Zamfara State where most of the bandit's leaders are based and have created camps deep in the forest of the State. From Zamfara State, banditry has spread to all the States sharing boundaries with it such as Kebbi, Sokoto, Katsina, Kaduna and Niger States. However, there are also bandits mainly Fulani who are natives of these States and were once cattle rears living peacefully in their respective States. In Zamfara State alone, around 62 different bandit groups are operating in the State from their forest bases (Rufa'i, 2021). Most of the bandits have been engaged in banditry for more than ten years (2011-2024). They are very familiar with the geographical terrain of the North West region and have created a network of informants and collaborators in the larger society.

From the outbreak of banditry in 2011 to date (2024), a series of measures, peaceful and forceful have been adopted to curb it. The peaceful measures include dialogue on amnesty and peace deals by the governments of Katsina and Zamfara States for example. The forceful measures include security operations Sharan Daji, Puff Adder, Dirar Mikiya, Harbin Kunama, Hadarin Daji, Accord, Thunder Strike, and Sahel Sanity by the Military, Police and Civil Defense Corps (Wodu, 2020). There are also restrictive measures aimed at drastically reducing or even ending the activities of bandits. One of the restrictive measures the Security Challenges Containment Order included the shutdown of the telecom network/service from September to December 2021 (Ladan and Suleiman, 2022).

Despite these measures, the banditry has persisted leading to continued loss of lives and destruction of properties among others. A committee was set up to investigate the menace of banditry headed by a former Inspector General of Police, reported that in Zamfara State between June 2011 and May 2019, 4,983 women were widowed, 25,050 children were orphaned and more than 190,000 people were displaced as a result of banditry (Wodu, 2010).

The insecurity caused by banditry in Zamfara State has recently attracted the attention of the United Nations which organized a stakeholders' workshop on insecurity, crime and drug abuse in the capital Gusau from 4th to 6th June 2024. The outcome of the workshop is expected to shape future policy decisions for combating insecurity, especially the banditry that has been bedevilling the State (This Day, 2024a).

Many studies were conducted on banditry in Zamfara State. Some of them are reviewed here for this paper. Anka (2017) study found out that Zamfara State has made efforts to address the underlying crises from 2011 to 2017 but the peace deal collapsed leading to the eruption of fresh violence. Nadama (2019) study found that banditry poses a serious threat not only to the internal security of Zamfara State but to the national security of Nigeria as a whole given its impacts and implications. The study revealed that the factors responsible for banditry include unemployment, poverty, and injustice by traditional rulers, drug abuse, and huge financial benefits among others.

Shehu and Giro's (2021) study found that banditry poses an enormous challenge to the development of the health sector in Zamfara State. Findings revealed that banditry hurts health care services in banditry-prone communities. Incessant attacks by bandits have led to the killing and kidnapping of healthcare personnel as well as healthcare beneficiaries. It disrupted health facilities, health outreach programs, medical supplies and the already weak healthcare system in rural areas of the State (Shehu and Giro, 2021). Saminu, Bin Yaacob and Binti-Shukri (2023) study found out that the bandits' desperate attempts to survive were due to the competing challenge from the vigilante members and government to eliminate them and their source of illegitimate wealth. This has led to the loss of many lives due to frequent attacks, increasing kidnapping for ransom, and destruction of more properties with appalling human displacements (Saminu Bin Yaacoub and Binti Shukri, 2023).

Ezirin, Haruna, Paul and Humbe's (2023) study found that security forces and individuals are strategizing to combat the menace of bandits in Zamfara State. But some criminally minded individuals is crippling the efforts by providing information and other logistics to the bandits. Findings show that the informants supply information on security raids, attacks and counter-attacks, supply of food items, fuel, sale of stolen properties, arms and ammunition supply, information revealing wealthy targets etc (Ezirim, Haruna, Paul and Humbe, 2023).

From the studies reviewed, it can be observed that Anka (2017) focused on the collapse of the peace deal and the resurgence of fresh violence. Nadama (2019) focused on banditry and internal security, Shehu and Giro (2021) focused on banditry and healthcare delivery, Saminu, Bin Yacoub and Binti Shukri (2023) focused on bandits struggle for survival and its humanitarian impacts and Ezirim, Haruna, Paul and Humbe (2023) focused on the role of bandits' informants in the fight against banditry.

This paper focuses on the persistence of banditry in Zamfara State despite a series of Federal and State government efforts aimed at curbing or tackling the security challenge. The temporal scope of the review is from January 2023 to March 2024 which discusses the most recent efforts and measures adopted to tackle the menace of banditry in Zamfara State, North Western Nigeria.

Description of the Study Area

Zamfara State is one of the 36 States of the Federal Republic of Nigeria created on October, 1st 1996 from the defunct Sokoto State by the regime of Late Gen (Rtd) Sani Abacha. The State derived its name from a river, river Zamfara one of the tributaries of River Sokoto that drains the central and Southern parts of the State. The State lies between latitudes $11^0$00'00''N and $13^0$00'00N and longitudes $5^0$00'00E and $7^0$00'00 (Mustafa, 2022). The State covers an aerial extent of 39,862 km2 or 15,352 square miles which makes the State 7th largest out of the 36 States in terms of land area coverage. Zamfara State is bordered to the North by the Republic of Niger along 32km borderline, to the South by Kebbi, Niger and Kaduna State, to the west by Sokoto and the east by Katsina State (See figure1). The capital of the State is Gusau located 100km from Funtua along the Funtua –Sokoto highway. The State consists of fourteen (14) Local Government Areas

(LGAs) which are smaller administrative units within the State.

The State has a population of 3,278,873 according to the 2006 census and the recent estimates in 2022 put the population at 5,833,500 with a population density of 82 persons per km^2 (Mustafa, 2022). The State is mainly populated by Hausa people whose major occupations are rain-fed and irrigation farming, trading and commercial activities within Nigeria and across the border with neighbouring Niger Republic. Another group of people who also populate the State are the Fulani whose major occupation is cattle rearing. Decades of clashes between the Hausa farmers and some Fulani cattle herders is what have escalated to banditry in the State.

In terms of the physical setting, the relief of the State is part of the high plains of Hausa land with few isolated hills such as Mashika hill (748), Tama Hill (604m) and the Kwatarkwashi Rock (700metres) (Kabara, 2015). The State is well drained by rivers such as Bunsuru, Gada, Gegere, Sokoto and Zamfara that rose from dissected basement complex plains and pediplains of Katsina State to drain into river Niger (Macmillan, 2010 and Alo et al, 1998). The climate is tropical continental type that is characterized by short wet season and long dry season. The vegetation type is Sudan Savanna with grasses and short scattered trees. In several areas around the State, trees grow together in large areas to form forests such as along the eastern boundary with Katsina State from parts of Zurmi to Birnin Magaji to Gusau and Tsage LGAs. Other forest areas include Kwiambana, Munhaye and Gando forests all of which serve as hideouts and operating bases for the bandits (Abdullateef, 2022).

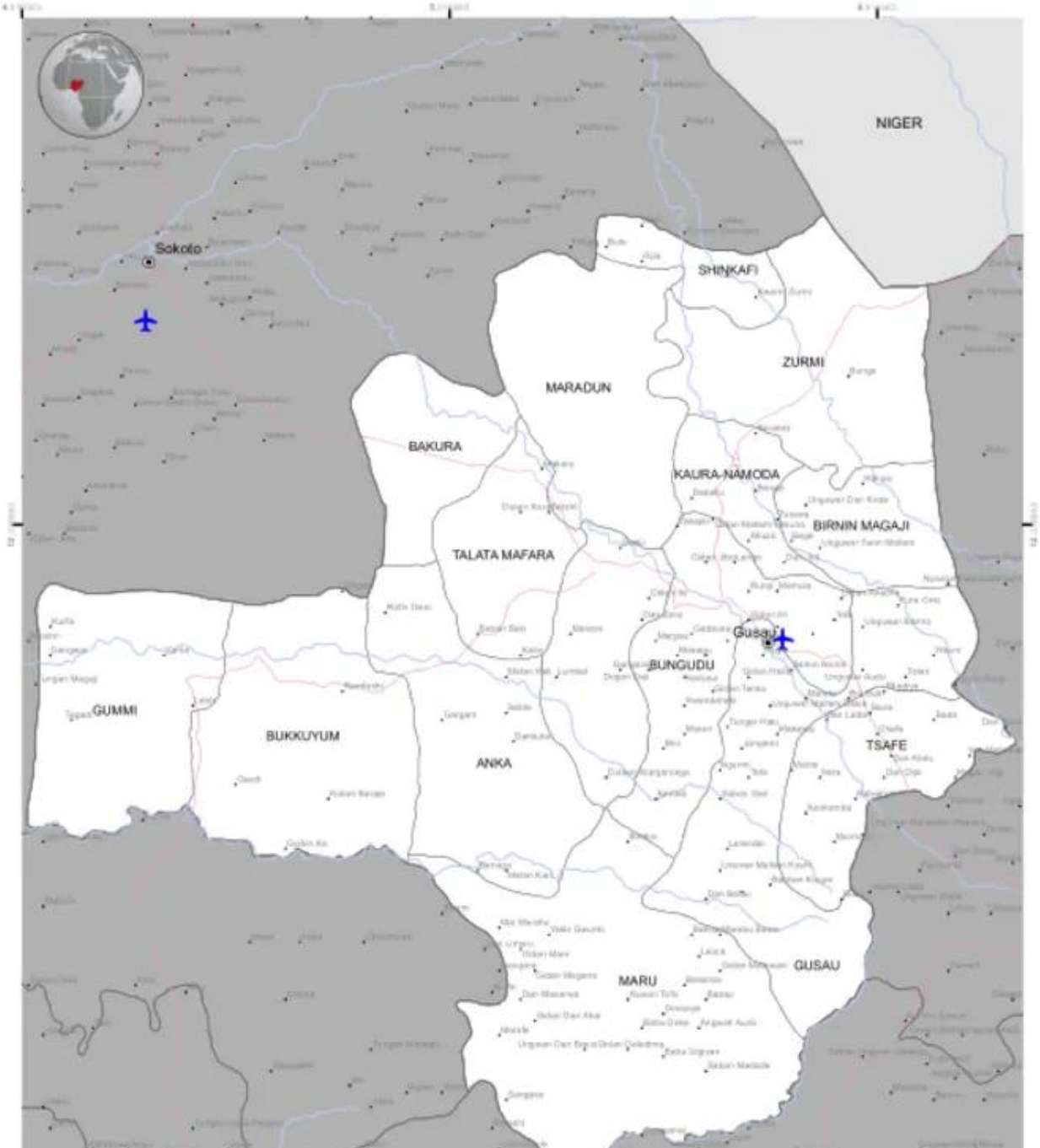

Figure 1: Map of the study area Zamfara State

Banditry Incidences in Zamfara State

Banditry incidents occur daily in Zamfara State with many incidences going unreported and therefore not documented. The incidences occur as a result of the large number of bandit groups found in most parts of the State in both rural and urban settings, along, roads, farmlands etc. Table 1 below shows selected incidences of banditry from January to July 2023.

Table 1: Selected banditry incidences in Zamfara State from January to June 2023.

S/N	Date and Location	Banditry Incidence	Impacts of the incidences
1	January 25th 2023 at Birnin Magaji, Birnin Magaji LGA	Bandits fired grenades at vigilante members in a duel between the two groups	One grenade exploded to create a crater close to a stream while other grenades were recovered undetonated
2	March 24th 2023 at Mareri area of Gusau, the State Capital	Bandits invaded the home of the special Adviser of Political Affairs to Zamfara State Governor	Kidnapping of the Special Adviser to the forest hideouts of the bandits
3	April 1st 2023 at rented student's hostel of Federal University Gusau at Sabon Gida Village, Bungudu LGA.	Bandits invaded the rented female hostel after overpowering the security guards	The kidnapping of two (2) female students and the demand for the sum of N5 million on each of the students
4	April, 7th 2023 outside Wanzamai Village, Tsafe LGA.	Bandits rounded off large numbers of people around farmlands and forest areas	Kidnapping of eighty-five (85) persons mostly women and children. Demand N20,000 on each including the withdrawal of security forces from Wanzamai Village
5	April, 26th 2023 at Kasuwar Daji Village Kaura Namoda LGA	Bandits launched an attack on the house of the Village Head	Kidnapping of the Village Head to the forest hideouts of the bandits

6	July 11th 2023 at a checkpoint along Bungudu to Gusau road	Bandits laid an ambush on Police at a checkpoint along the road opening fire at them	1. Four (4) policemen were killed by the bandits during the ambush. 2. Rustling of many cattle at Tagero Village
7	July 27th 2023 at Talata Mafara Low cost Housing Estate Talata Mafara LGA	Bandits invaded the residential houses of construction workers at the low-cost houses	Ten (10) company construction workers were kidnapped by the bandits
8	July 27th 2023 near Damaga village Maradun LGA	Bandits intercepted women who went to fetch firewood from a nearby forest area	Twenty-three (23) women were kidnapped and forced into the forest hideouts of the bandits
9	August 1st 2023 at Mai Inchi Maru LGA	Bandits attacked the town in broad daylight shooting sporadically into the air	The kidnapping of the two sons of the late Nigerian Union of Journalist Chairman and Six (6) other people including the wife of the late Chairman
10	August 14th 2023 at Bungudu town Bungudu LGA	Bandits invaded parts of the town shooting sporadically to scare the people	Seven (7) persons were kidnapped including the son of the District Head

Source: Ladan (2024b), Altine (2023a).

From Table 1 above, it can be observed that from the ten banditry incidences from nine LGAs, a total of one hundred and forty (140) people were kidnapped by the bandits. Those kidnapped include politicians, traditional rulers and students. Those who were killed include even policemen who were deployed to the State to provide security. The bandits are also making advances in their nefarious activities from the firing of bullets to grenades that could explode to cause more harm to the people as in the first incidence at Birnin Magaji town. Also, their attacks are happening even in broad daylight which shows the audacious and daring nature of the bandits as in the case of Mai Inchi in Maru LGA. The bandits are making extra demands besides ransom as they have demanded for the withdrawal of security forces from the Wanzamai village. This is a clear attempt by the bandits to clear any obstruction that will foil nefarious their activities.

Table 2: Selected Banditry incidences in Zamfara State from September to December 2023.

S/N	Date and Location	Banditry Incidences	Impacts of the Incidence
1	September 22nd 2023 at Sabon Gida residential area of Bungudu LGA	Bandits invaded campus of the students' hostels to kidnap students	1. Kidnapping of twenty-four (24) students of the University. 2. Gun duels between the bandits and security agents but could not stop the kidnapping.
2	October 6th 2023 at Tsohuwar Kasuwa Village, Kaura Namoda LGA	Bandits invaded part of the village targeting the house of a man	1. Kidnapping of five members of the man's family 2. Rustling of some herds of cattle belonging to some villagers
3	October 31st 2023 at a checkpoint along Tsafe-Funtua road in Tsafe LGA	Bandits launched an attack on Policemen conducting stop and search operation along the road at a checkpoint	Three (3) policemen were killed in the attack.
4	November 12th Villages in Bungudu LGA	Bandits carried out deadly attacks on villages in the LGA and were interrupted by Zamfara State Community Volunteer Corpse.	1- Eight (8) persons were killed during the attack including six (6) among the volunteer corps 2. Rob properties including cattle

5	November 18th 2023 at Ruwan Dorowa Village Maru LGA	Bandits silently invaded the village moving from house to house and stationing some of their gang members at strategic positions	1- Kidnapping of seventeen persons mostly married women 2- Burgle shops to steal provisions and in the process killed a police officer.
6	November 18th 2023 at MutumJi Village Dansadau LGA	Bandit leader Damina and his foot soldiers surrounded the village after night prayer	1- Kidnapping of over 100 people including women and children for failure to pay a levy of N50 million
7	December 10th 2023 outside Zurmi town Zurmi LGA	Bandits launched an attack on the town shooting sporadically ro scare the residents	1- The residents fled while locking their houses to prevent theft 2- Security forces tried to confront them to stop them from reaching the town
8	December 12th 2023 inside Zurmi town Zurmi LGA	Bandits continued to advance into the town attacking a military base	1- Killing of three (3) soldiers 2- Four patrol vehicles including an Armored Personnel Carrier belonging to the security forces were burnt by the bandits
9	December 9th 2023 at Nasarawa Zurmi, Zurmi LGA	Bandits launched an attack on the village close to Zurmi town	Killing of two (2) persons, kidnapping of five (5) women and two (2) persons sustained injuries
10	December 8th 2023 around Gidan Shaho village near Zurmi town, Zurmi LGA	Bandits continued a series of attacks in Zurmi town and nearby villages in retaliation to attacks on their den by the army.	1- Kidnapping of twenty-two (2) persons. 2- Burning of local grain silos, shops and houses

Sources-Ladan (2024b), Ibrahim (2023) and Babangida (2023).

From Table 2, it can be observed that six LGAs were attacked by the bandits. The bandits were reported to have carried out attacks on Zurmi town in Zurmi LGA in four consecutive days because soldiers recovered rustled cattle from their den (Ibrahim, 2023). The attacks were even carried out on police checkpoints and the divisional police office in Zurmi town in Zurmi LGA. Thirty-nine (39) people were killed in the attacks including policemen and soldiers at their various duty posts. One hundred and forty-one (141) people were kidnapped by the bandits from Table 2 including students and married women. Kidnapping for ransom remains one of the dominant activities of the bandits with only two cattle rustling incidences. The largest number of people kidnapped from Mutuniji village of Dansadau LGA were kidnapped for failure to pay a levy of N50 million imposed by the bandits' leader Damina (Babangida, 2023). Also, from Table 2 it can be observed that many properties were destroyed through burning by the bandits such as patrol vehicles of security forces and grain silos belonging to the people

.

T**able 3: Selected banditry incidences in Zamfara State from January to April 2024.**

S/N	Date and Location	Banditry Incidences	Impacts of the Incidences
1	January 3rd 2024 at Nahuce Bungudu LGA	Bandits launched an attack on the village shooting sporadically at the people	1- Seven (7) were killed in the sporadic shooting. 2- Rustled cattle some of which returned to the village later
2	February, 13th 2024 at Kasuwar Daji Village Kaura Namoda LGA	Bandits invaded the village shooting indiscriminately to scare the residents	1- About forty (40) persons were kidnapped in house to house raid. 2- Attacked a police station disarmed the policemen on duty

			and killed two of them and two residents.
3	February 20th 2024 along Gusau Sokoto Road in Zamfara	Bandits blocked the most important highway in the State of kidnap travellers	Twenty-six (26) travellers were kidnapped along the road 2- Other motorists were stranded waiting for the road to be unblocked.
4	February 25th 2024 at a Police checkpoint at Tazame Village along Tsafe Gusau Road in Bungudu LGA	Bandits attacked a police checkpoint close to Kwatarkwashi town	1- One Police officer was killed during the attack after an exchange of gunfire 2- Burning of the checkpoint by the bandits as the police were overpowered
5	February 29th 2024 at a mosque in Tsafe town Tsafe LGA	Bandits invaded the mosque early morning to kidnap worshippers	Thirty (30) worshippers were kidnapped by the bandits. one was rescued by the police the next day.
6	March 21st 2024 at Wanzamai Village Tsafe LGA	Bandits launched an attack on the village and then crossed the border to Yankara village in Faskari LGA of Katsina State	1- Killing of two (2) persons who are a father and a son in the Wanzamai village and also killed two soldiers and seized their weapons at Yankara in Katsina State
7	March 22nd 2024 at Tsafe town Tsafe LGA	Hundreds of bandits launched attacks on the town splitting into three groups targeting different locations	1- Bandits killed two newly deployed Community Protection Guards (CPG) including the head at Tsafe LGA 2- Bandits set two vehicles on fire belonging to CPG and the soldiers. 3- Kidnapped six road construction workers at a private home as they retreated
8	April 2024 along Danbaza Junction and Maradun Town Maradun LGA	Bandits barricaded the road opening fire on people in the vehicles trapped along the road	A chieftain of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) was killed by the gunfire.
9	April 24th 2023 at Zurmi town Zurmi LGA	Bandits attacked the Palace of the Emir of Zurmi and nearby houses	1- Killing of three persons including a palace guard. 2- Destruction of MTN telecommunication mast and two generating sets 3- Kidnapping of eight residents of the town.
10	April, 20th 2023 Tsafe town Tsafe LGA	Bandits opened fire at people while the Tsafe weekly market was operating on the weekly market day in broad day light	Six (6) persons were killed including two traders who came from Gusau to purchase chickens on retail prices.

Source: Ladan (2024b), Jargaba (2024) and Ibrahim (2024).

From table 1 above it can be observed that 50% of the attacks were carried out in Tsafe LGA even in broad day-light on weekly market days. Among the places attacked, even places of worship such as mosques were not spared by the bandits. A total of 17 persons lost their lives including two among the newly inaugurated Zamfara State CPGs. The attacks also show the high mobile nature of the bandits to launch attacks in Zamfara and then quickly move to neighboring Katsina State to launch other attacks. The total number of people kidnapped is 102 including construction workers. The properties destroyed include vehicles belonging to the CPGs and the Nigeria army.

It is clear that the bandits are becoming daring to launch attacks in towns and security agents in broad day light.

Measures Adopted by the Federal Government to Tackle Banditry in Zamfara State

The Security of lives and properties of the citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in any State of the federation lies with the Federal Government as enshrined in the 1999 constitution. The constitution clearly states that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government (Abdulrahman and Akuva, 2020). It is based on this that the Federal Government recruited and trained a number of security forces to provide security to the citizens. According to the constitution, security is solely the responsibility of the federal government because it is on the executive-legislative list. Since the start of banditry in Zamfara State in 2011, a number of measures were adopted by the Federal Government to tackle it. Some of the recent measures are those adopted by former President Buhari during his second tenure (2019-2023) in particular in 2011 following the mass abduction of school children in Zamfara and other NW States. There are also those adopted by President Tinubu from May 29th 2023 to date (April, 2024). The table 4 below shows the measures adopted by the Federal Government particularly in the year 2021 in order to counter banditry in Zamfara State and indeed the North West Geo-Political Zone.

Table 4: Federal Government Counter Banditry Measures in Zamfara State 2021-2023

S/N	Date and Measure	Intended Result/Outcome	Effectiveness of the Measures
1	October 15th 2019 closure of land border	Stop the flow of illegal arms and ammunition used by the bandits to carry out attacks	Did not stop the influx of illegal weapons to the bandits
2	March 2nd 2021 ban on mining	Imposition enforcement and halting all mining activities that were believed to be fueling and financing banditry in Zamfara State	Did not lead to reduction in banditry
3	March 2nd 2021 improving security	Deployment of massive military and intelligence assets to restore normalcy in Zamfara and neighboring States.	Not fully effective as bandits were able to continue their activities
4	March 2nd 2021 Surveillance of non-state actors	Placing the bandits under surveillance by the intelligence agencies for decimation	Not fully effective in tackling banditry
5	March 2nd 2021 No fly zone over Zamfara State	Halt the supply of arms and ammunition to the bandits using helicopters as reported by the local people and bandits foot soldiers	Did not halt the flow of weapons to the bandits
6	March, 2nd 2021- Directive to reclaim ungoverned spaces	Directive to new service chiefs to reclaim all areas dominated by bandits such as forests and forest reserves	Not carried out as bandits still live in their forest camps
7	April, 23rd 2021 Reading the riot act to bandits	Strong warning and threat by the Presidency aimed at discouraging banditry	Did not discourage them as they still live in their forest camps
8	January 27th 2021 Rejigging the security architecture	Appointment of new service chiefs as a new approach to tackle insecurity including banditry in the North West	Limited success was achieved in tackling banditry
9	March 3rd 2021-shoot on sight order	Order to the security forces to go into the forests and shoot bandits holding arms such as AK47 riffles.	The order was carried out in few cases
10	September 9th 2021 Telecommunication shutdown	Restrict the lines of communication of the bandits thereby stopping kidnapping and targeted attacks	Effective while it lasted for four months from September to December 2021

11	January 5th 2022 Official gazette declaring bandits as terrorists	Legal empowerment of Federal Government to use maximum force against the bandits such as using Tucano jets against them.	Not effective as the maximum force was not used to counter banditry
12	November 15th 2022: Declaring bandits as wanted	Supply information that will lead to the arrest of nineteen most wanted terrorists (bandits) with a bounty of N5m to members of the public	Not fully effective as only few of the bandit leaders were arrested.
13	January to March 2023 cashless policy and Naira redesign	Reducing cases of kidnapping by bandits and identify sources of terrorism financing by sponsors of banditry	Poor implementation of the policy made it ineffective and futile

Sources: Yusuf (2021), Okene (2023) and Ladan & Suleiman (2022)

From table 4 above it can be observed that the Federal Government has adopted several measures to counter the activities of bandits, their collaborators and sponsors. The measures range from closure of land borders in 2019 to the appointment of new security chiefs up to the adaptation of cashless policy and Naira re-design in 2023. But despite the adaptation of these measures, banditry still persists. It is important here to stress that had the measures adopted by the Federal Government under President Buhari been effective then banditry as a form of insecurity couldn't have been inherited by President Tinubu administration.

Since coming in to office, President Tinubu has continued where his predecessor left by continuing the security operations against the bandits in Zamfara State. Operation Hadarin Daji (OPHD) in particular has recorded some level of success in the fight against banditry. Though in September 2023 and May 2024, there were reports of negotiations with the bandits by the Federal Government without consultations with the Zamfara State government. A Joint Task Force comprising the security agents, the local vigilante groups and the CPGs have been carrying out large scale onslaught against the bandits in different parts of Zamfara State (Audu, 2024). Many bandits' leaders and their foot-soldiers were eliminated from their forest hideouts during the onslaughts.

Measures Adopted by Zamfara State Government to Tackle Banditry in the State

Since the beginning of banditry in 2011, successive governments have adopted a number of measures towards tackling the banditry that has bedeviled the State and neighboring states. In fact, most of the State Governors have campaigned and pledged to end the banditry that has crippled the socio-economic and political development of the State. The present government under Governor Lawal Dare has adopted a number of measures aimed at tackling banditry in the State from its inception in May, 2023 to April, 2024. The measures can be seen on table 5 below.

Table 5: Zamfara State Government counter-banditry measures from May 2023 to April, 2024.

S/N	Date	Measure Adopted	Intended Result /Outcome
1	September 2023	Discussion with the Federal Government on secret peace talks with the bandits	Adopt a common decision on the best measure to tackle banditry in the state
2	December 26th 2023	Shutting down of eleven cattle markets in the State	Deny the bandits where to sell off rustled cows thereby discouraging cattle rustling

3	January 31st 2024	Launching of Community Protection Guards	Provide additional security force to complement the conventional security forces and vigilante members
4	February 6th 2024	Establishment of Security Trust Fund	To generate funds that can be used to support security forces deployed to the State and victims of banditry such as those orphaned and widowed
5	February 22nd 2024	Visits by the State Governor to the LGAs recently affected by banditry	Stress to the people the resolve of the State Government to end banditry and decision to provide structures and equipment to policemen
6	March, 14th 2024	Executive orders banning use of tinted glasses, unlabeled bread and illegal sale of petrol	Deny criminals a hiding place and bandits their most common fast food and restrict their movements
7	January 17th 2024	Stop traditional rulers from issuing mining rights/consent letters	Clamp down on mining activities that are fueling banditry and providing it with source of funds
8	September 13th 2023	Recruitment of 42,000 civilian joint taskforce members in the 14LGAs	To complement the government's efforts in addressing banditry in the State
9	August 5th 2023	Repaired several patrol vehicles of the security agents that were long out of use	Allow the security agents to go out on patrol in areas most affected by banditry
10	September 1st 2023	Deploying security agents in all the dangerous spots across the State	To prevent attacks or kidnappings by bandits and allow for free movement of people, goods and services.
11	April 1st 2024	Immediate restriction of movement from 7:00pm to 6:00am along the States border with neighboring Katsina and Sokoto States	To tackle the incessant kidnappings along the Sokoto- Funtua highway.
12	April, 20th 25th 2024	The State Governor traveling to the United State for summit on handling insecurity	Learn modern techniques of handling banditry such as the use of intelligence and technology

Sources: Ladan (2024b), Atungwu (2024) and Altine (2023).

From table 5 above it can be observed that the present government of Zamfara State has adopted a number of measures aimed at tackling the insecurity arising from banditry since assumption of office in May 2023. In August 2023, the Government repaired the

operational vehicles of the security agents for effective patrol. In September 2023, three measures were adopted in order to prevent kidnapping, increase number of security personnel and sort out issues with the Federal Government. In December, 2023 a measure was adopted to curtail cattle rustling and in January 2024, the State launched its own security outfit to complement the efforts of the security forces. In February 2024, the measures adopted were meant to support security forces and victims of banditry including visits to the affected areas by the State Governor. In March 2024, measures were adopted to restrict the supply of vital products to the bandits. In April, 2024, the measures were meant to tackle incessant kidnappings and improve the capacity to handle the banditry.

Factors Responsible for the Persistence of Banditry in Zamfara State

Several reasons have been responsible for the persistence of banditry in Zamfara State despite the series of measures adopted by the Federal and State Governments. The factors are highlighted below:

(i)Empty Pronouncement of the Federal Government: The Federal Government under former President Buhari (2015-2023) has adopted a lot of measures to counter banditry in Zamfara State. But most of the pronouncements like "We have the capacity to crush you" are empty as the government couldn't crush the bandits up to the end of the regime in 2023 (Oluwafem, 2021i). Furthermore, the Presidential directives to reclaim ungoverned spaces and shoot at sight order were never carried out for counter banditry purposes. A study by Chukwugozie Kingsley and Aja (2020) found out that the leadership of President Buhari has shown gross incompetence in its attitude and character disposition towards tackling security challenges in Nigeria.

(ii)Inadequate Border Security forces: There are inadequate border security forces such as the forces of the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) to effectively patrol the border along Zamfara and neighboring States to prevent the flow of arms to the bandits. The personnel of the NCS were grossly inadequate to prevent the flow of the weapons during the period of the border closure. The result was that the bandits were never short of arms and ammunition during the period. Even former President Buhari himself was reported to have admitted that despite his regime's closure of land borders, arms and ammunition continued flowing illegally (Adetayo, 2021)

(iii)Inadequate Security Personnel: There are inadequate security personnel at the various checkpoints along the dangerous spots across the State. The result is that the bandits come in large numbers to launch attacks on police check points sometimes killing the policemen on duty as can be seen on tables 1 (Serial number 6), 2 (Serial number 3) and 3 (Serial number 4). Even the troops of OPHD are not adequately enough as the Nigerian Army is overstretched by various security operations in different States of the federation. According to Ladan and Suleiman (2022) inadequate security personnel was one of the reasons for the failure of the security challenges containment order in curbing banditry when it was introduced from September to December 2021.

(iv)Large Number of bandit's gangs: There is large number of bandits operating in Zamfara State, some of who have spread their activities to neighboring States. Approximately there are over 10,000 armed bandits operating across different parts of the State (Rufai, 2021). This large number means that attacks are carried out by the bandits on daily basis and even in broad daylight as can be seen on tables 1 (Serial number 9) and table 2 (serial number 3). The large number of bandits plus inadequate security forces to counter the bandits has made banditry to persist for more than a decade. The failure of the security forces to pre-empt attacks on villages or along roads and to respond promptly to distress calls has contributed to the success of the activities of the bandits such as kidnapping and cattle rustling.

(v)Presence of Collaborators and Informants: There is the presence of collaborators who collaborate with the bandits to facilitate their nefarious activities. The collaborators include those who supply them with the uniform of security agents, fuel for their motorcycle, food and medicines and indeed arms and ammunition. During the period of the enforcement of the security challenges containment order, many of such collaborators were arrested by the security agents. Some of the collaborators are found even within the security agents! For example, on March 4th 2021 a soldier and his girlfriend\ were arrested supplying ammunition and security uniforms to bandits (Maishanu, 2021).

There are also informants who supply the information needed by the bandits to carryout successful attacks on rich persons, herds of cattle, vehicles on transit and evading security forces. Even though many of the informants have been arrested, there are some of them that are still at large and working for the bandits.

(vi)High rate of Poverty and Corruption: There is high rate of poverty in Zamfara State like most other States in the North West Zone. The State has the highest number of the poor and vulnerable people in Nigerian with a record of 3,8936,484 people from 825,337 households according to data from the National Social Registry (Olatunji, 2021). The high rate of poverty is pushing many Fulani youths to join banditry to serve as foot soldiers. Among the Hausas some are lured with small amount of money to serve as informants and collaborators due to poverty. Also due to poverty, many people living in villages do not have the money to purchase locally made guns to defend themselves against the bandits.

On the issue of corruption, there are some personnel among the security agents who would not want the banditry to end as a result of the huge amount of money allocated to ensure security in Zamfara and other States in the North West. A report on the insecurity in the North West zone prepared by the Federal House of Representatives recommended that the Federal Government should fish out nulls from the army (Nwabugiogu, 2022). The Governor of Katsina State recently raised alarm on how banditry has become a business venture for security agents and government officials due to the prevalence of corruption in Nigeria (This Day, 2024b).

(vii)Illicit Mining Activities: Zamfara State is rich in mineral resources such as alluvial gold, iron ore, limestone etc. These mineral resources have attracted illegal Mining Corporation who have money and are therefore powerful. They are reported to be financial sponsors of banditry so that they can continue their activities unnoticed. They are reported to be suppliers of arms and ammunition to the bandits using helicopters which make the closure of land borders ineffective. It was in order to curb the activities of illegal miners that the Federal Government on March 2nd 2021 halted all mining activities in Zamfara State. Even the incumbent Minister of Solid Mineral Development has stated that those behind illegal mining are sponsoring banditry and terrorism on December 11th 2023 (ChapiOdekina, 2023).

Conclusion

Banditry has emerged as the most devastating form of insecurity in the North West Geo-Political Zone from 2011 to date (2024). It began in Zamfara State and gradually spread to its neighboring States and has persisted since then. This review found out that there are banditry incidences occurring almost on daily basis in the State which many incidences not reported by the media and or the security forces. The Federal Government under President Buhari had adopted several measures aimed at countering banditry but it still persisted and hence inherited by the President Tinubu regime. The present Zamfara State Government on its part has introduced and reinforced a number of measures to tackle the menace posed by the banditry. The persistence of the banditry for over a decade is due to a number of factors, many of which are the responsibility of the

Federal Government. The implications are that the persistence of the banditry means more lives will be lost, more people will be kidnapped and ransom paid, more properties will be destroyed by the bandits. It is therefore strongly recommended that both the Federal and Zamfara State governments should adopt bold and decisive measures to tackle banditry in the State and the North West zone in general.

Recommendations

Based on the review, the following recommendations are made in order to end banditry in Zamfara State which has persisted for over a decade.

(i)President Tinubu should be strong and decisive in leading the country especially in tackling the persistent insecurity facing the country. In line with this, the Presidents' pronouncement should be respected and carried out by the security agents. Any security agent that fails to carry out a presidential directive should face court martial to serve as deterrent to others.

(ii)Adequate Border security agents should be recruited for effective patrolling of the land border across the North West Zone. This is important in preventing the free flow of arms and ammunition to the bandits and other criminal groups operating in the zone.

(iii)Adequate security forces such as the police and army should be recruited in order to provide the manpower needed to confront criminal groups such as the bandits operating in the North West zone. Security presence should be established in rural areas to prevent the activities of criminal groups such as the bandits.

(iv)The Federal Government should secretly organize a massive land and air operations in Zamfara State with a view to flushing the bandits out of their forest hideouts. After that, forest guards should be deployed to guard the forests and forest reserves to prevent future habitation by criminal gangs.

(v)Security agents should continue their crack down on bandits' collaborators and informants. This is important in restricting the activities of the bandits. Any person caught should be tried in a court of law and prosecuted to serve as a deterrent to others.

(vi)The Federal and State Government should introduce programs aimed at reducing the level of poverty in Zamfara State. The programs should aim at promoting farming and cattle rearing activities which the vast majority of the people depend on.

(vii)The Federal Government should deploy the personnel of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to monitor the funds allocated to the various security operations involving the army, air force, police and the civil defense corps. In addition, security agents should be held accountable whenever there are attacks on the people.

(vii) The Federal Government should name and shame those behind illegal mining activities that are believes to be sponsoring banditry in order to continue their activates. They should also be tried in a court of law to make them pay for the crimes they committed against innocent Nigerians.

References

Abdullateef, I. (2022) Sambisa of North West Zamfara State Commissioner Ask Army to Raid Munhaye Forest https://www.thecable.ng/

Abdulrahman, A. and Akuva, I.I. (2020). Thomas Hobbes Social Contract Theory and the Menace of Banditry in Katsina State. *FUDMA Journal of Politics and International Affairs* 3(1). 189-177.

Adetayo , O. (2022) Buhari Admits Border Closure didn't stop Freee flow of Arms, Ammunition. https://www.punch.ng.com/buhari-odmits-border-closure.

Altine M, (2023a). Bandits Kidnap 23 Zamfara Women 10 Construction Workers. https://www.puncgng.com/bandits-kidnap-23-Zamfara-women-10-construction.

Altine, M. (2023b). Governor Lawal has taken Bold Steps to Address Banditry Commissioner https://www.punchng.com/governor-lawal=has-taken-bold-steps

Alo,B.T.,Oluwakudejo,J.D.,Fakiyesi,T.Omojola,D.Soneye,A.S.,Osho,Y.B.and Ayoola,B.(1998). Katsina State Environmental Action Plan. Final Report. Federal Environmental Protection Agency Under World Bank Assisted Program, Ikeja, Lagos.

Anka, A.S (2017) Emerging Issues in Zamfara State Armed Banditry and Cattle Rustling: Collapse of the Peace Deal and Resurgence of Fresh Violence. *International Journal Innovative Research and Development* 6 (12) 161-170

Atungwu, M. (2024). Insecurity: Zamfara State Government Restricts Movement Along, Sokoto Katsina Borders. https://www.dailypost.ng/insecurity-zamfara-state.

Audu, U. (2024). Governor Lawal Lauds Troops Renewed Onslaught, Denied Abduction of 500 People in Zamfara State. https://www.dailynigerian/governor-lawal-lauds-troops-renewed-onslaught-denied-abduction-of-500-people-in-zamfara-state.

Babangida, M. (2023). Terrorist Abduct Over 100 Zamfara Residents for failing to Pay Protection Levy. https:www.premuimtimesng.com/terrorists-abducts-over-100.

ChapiOdekna, G. (2023). Powerful Nigeran nvolved n llegal Mining, Funding Banditry, Terrorism. https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/12/top-nigerians-involved-in-illegal-mining-funding-banditry-terrorism-minister/

Chukwugozie, C., Kingsley, U. and Aja, E.F. (2020) Leadership and Challenges of National Security: Buhari Administration in Perspective. *African Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies (AJPAS)* 13 (1). 56-68

Dmella, R. (2018) Dacoity in India: Investigating Thievery and Banditry in the British Raj's Jewel. *Asia Pacific Security Challenges*. Springer International Publishing.

Ezirim, G.E., Haruna, N., Paul D.F and Humbe, S.T. (2023) Complicating Role of Bandits Informants in the Fight Against Banditry in Zamfara State Nigeria *FUWUKARI Journal of Social Science (FUWUSS)* 2 (2) 255-272

Ibrahim, Y. A (2023). Zamfara Community Under siege As Bandits Strike. https.www.dailytrust.com/zamfaracommunity-under-siege-as-bandits-strike

Ibrahim, Y.A (2024). Bandits Attack Zurmi Emirs Palace Kill 3. https://www.dailytrust.com/bandits-attacks.

Jargaba Y. I. (2024) Report of how bandits killed 15 persons in Katsina bState and 6 people in Zamfara State on a weekly Market day at a time the State Governors travelled to USA for Security Summit Deutsche Well Hausa Service Report.

Kabara M. (2015) Tourism: The Undeveloped Kotorkoshi/Kuyarbana Tourism Sites in Zamfara State. Platform Magazine Vol. 1 No.6 November 2015 p.47

Ladan, S.I (2024a). Manifestation of Banditry in Safana Area of Katsina State, North Westeern Nigeria. Chpater 8 In A.C.Okolo, S.Ngon (eds) *Banditry and Security Crisis in Nigeria* Rutledge New York USA.

Ladan, S. I. (2024b). List of Banditry Incidences in Katsina State from September 2019 to July 2024. A. Private Collection of Banditry Incidences in Katsina State.

Ladan, S.I and Suleiman, M.A (2022) An Assessment of The Effectiveness of Security Challenges Containment in Tackling Banditry in the Frontline Local Government Areas of Katsina State Chaoter 4 In : B.I. Kadandani, J.Yecho, M.Agbo and M.Iyoboyi (eds) *Contemporary Issues in Nigeria's Socioeconomic and Political Development* Federal University Dutsinma, Katsina State, Nigeria.

Macmillan Nigeria (2010) Macmillan Wall Map of Nigeria Political Mammalian Nigeria Publishers Limited, Lagos.

Madubuegwu, C.E. and Abah, N.C.(2023). Armed Banditry and National Security in Nigeria. *International Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities* 8 (4). 1-15.

Maishanu, A.A (2021), Nigerian Soldier Arrested Supplying Ammunition, Uniforms to Bandits. https://www.preuimtimesng.com/nigerian-soldier.

Mustafa, A. (2024). Causes and Consequences of Armed Banditry, Kidnapping and Cattle Rustling in Some Selected Communities n Zamfara State. *Bakolori Journal of General Studies* 12 (2). 3604 – 3629.

Nadama, M.U (2019) Armed Banditry and Internal Security in Zamfara State. *International Journal of Scientific Engineering* 10 (8) 129-1226.

Nwabugiogu, L. (2022). Insecurity: House of Reps Security Summit Report Provides Solutions. https://www.vanguard.com/insecurity-house-of-reps.

Okene, A. (2023) Terrorist Display of New Naira Proves CBN Policy Futile-Sheik Gumi https://punchng.com/terrorists-displaying-new-naira-proves-cbn-policy-futile-sheikh-

Olatunji, S. (2021) Zamfara State Home to Highest Number of Poor Nigerians-NSR. https://www.punchng.com/zamfara-state-home-to-highest-number-of-poor

Oluwafemi, A. (2021) "We have capacity to crush you" Buhari warns Bandits over Zamfara Killings..https://www.thecable.ng/we-have-capacity-to-crush-you-buhari-warns-bandits-over-zamfara-killings/

Ripples Nigeria (RN) (2020) Insecurity in West Africa caused by Gaddafi's Mercenaries-Buhari. https://www.ripplesnigeria.com/insecurity-in-west-africa

Rufa'I, M.A. (2018). Cattle Rustling and Armed Banditry Along Nigeria-Niger Borderlands. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (IOSR-JHSS)* 22 (4) 66-73.

Rufa'i, M. (2021). I am a Bandit: A Decade of Research in Zamfara State Bandits Den. Public Lecture at the Department of History Usman Danfodio University Sokoto delivered on September 8th 2021.

Saminu, I., Bin Yacoub, C.M. and Binti Shukri, S. (2023) Bandits Struggle for Survival and It's Humanitarian Impacts in Zamfara State, Nigeria. Cogent Social Sciences 9 (1) 1-21 https://doi.org/1080/23311886.2023.2241714.

Shehu, A. and Giro, M.U (2021). Banditry and Health Care Delivery Among Rural Households in Zamfara State North Western Nigeria. *Journal of Conflict Resolution and Social Issues* 2 (1) 101-108.

This Day (2024a). Insecurity: U.N. Begins Begins Stakeholders Workshop in Zamfara State. https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2024/06/04/insecurity-un-begins-stakeholders-workshop-in-zamfara/

This Day (2024b). Banditry Now Business Venture for Security Agents, Government Officials-Katsina State Governor Raises the Alarm. https://www.thsday.com/banditry-now-business-venture-for-security-agents.

Times Of India (TOI) (2024) Haiti Capital City Under Siege Amid Spasm of Gang Violence. https://www,toi.com/haiti-capital-city-under-siege-amid-spasm-of-

Wodu, N. (2020). Not All Violent Problems Require Violent Solutions: Banditry in Nigeria's North West. Council of Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr/blog/not-all-violent-problems-require-violent-solutions-banditry-in-nigeria's-north-west-

Yusuf, U. (2021). Banditry: Things Are falling Apart, the Centre is Not Holding. A write up on banditry in North Western Nigeria by the Professor Haematology-Oncology and Bone Marrow Transplantation.