

Armed Banditry and National Security in Nigeria: An Exploratory Analysis

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Abstract

The North-West, an area of 216,065sq of the country's total land mass with projected population of over 50 million people who are predominantly farmers, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, is today ravaged by unabated menace of armed bandits and criminal gangs. In reference to this unpleasant situation, this paper examined extensively the dynamics and trends of armed banditry in the North-West region as a potential threat to national security. The methodology of the paper is qualitative design which illuminate the import of documentary sources of data collection (with emphasis on reports of international agencies, texts, articles, official bulletins), and non-participant observation of media coverage of events to textual-analyze the underlying issues and fundamentals of bandit insurgency in states of North-West region. The work revealed the existence of over 10,000 thousands armed bandits operating in rural communities and forests across Zamfara, Kastina, Kaduna and Sokoto states whose peril have led to over 50,000 thousands deaths; 210, 354 thousand people internally displaced from approximate 200 towns, 34,316 hectares of farmlands rendered inaccessible or (lost to bandits) and over 300 thousand livestock stolen from 2011 to 2021 occasioned with the abduction of 1, 436 school children from January to October 2021, as government and security agencies work fanatically to stem the tide. To complement the ongoing efforts, the discourse recommends national security summit to leverage on resourceful knowledge for holistic approach, inter-agency collaboration, and synergized roles as among the fundamentals to respond more efficiently to armed banditry in the North-West.

Keywords: Banditry, Bandits, National Security and North-West.

Introduction

The security situation in Nigeria is rapidly deteriorating in alarming scale and intensity. Sadly, it appears that the government and state security machineries were overwhelmed or perhaps oblivious of the bloodletting, agony and misery of Nigerians particularly in the northern regions of the federation. Indeed, torrents of national security threats have continued to elicit repeated calls for the resignation or impeachment of the former president of the federal republic, Muhammadu Buhari and overhauling of the security architecture. And, the call by former governors of Kastina, Aminu Bello Masari and Zamfara, Bello Matawalle for the indigenes and residents of their respective states to take up arms and defend themselves against armed bandits. Strange and disgusting the call may sound but it illuminate the height of public anger and disillusionment in view of the abysmal failure of government and its institutions as related to Section 14(1) b of the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria which indicates that the *"the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of the government"*.

Similarly, Igiebor, *e tal*(2021), revealed that in Nigeria, hardly anywhere is safe. Stories of blood attacks appear regularly in the news, so, few people get shocked by them. The northeast, northwest and southeast, play host to messengers of death. But the other three geopolitical zones are not any better. Not in a country where kidnapping has become a trade. So, those who escape *Boko Haram* in the northeast, the bandits in the northwest, and north central, must be vigilant and prayerful because of terrors without borders. In the southwest, arguably the safest among the six zones, criminal herders are always on rampage. Amotekun, the regional security outfit, is not sufficiently equipped to totally ward off the armed criminals. In the southeast geo-political zone, it is the indiscriminate killing and arson by so called unknown gunmen.

On Wednesday, 29th September, 2021, the Nigerian upper legislative chamber, the Senate in unanimous resolution called on the president of the federal republic to declare armed bandits as “terrorists”. This resolution resonated from the legislative motion sponsored by Senator Ibrahim Gobir (representing Sokoto East) at the wake of killing of 20 people and abduction of several others in Gatawa village in Sabon-Birni local government area of Sokoto state. The House of Representatives has also joined the Senate to echo the expedience of declaring the armed bandits as terrorists. It was further argued that such “declaration or proscription order” is timely to renew and redouble the efforts of security personnel to deal decisively with the menace of armed banditry. This call though replete with mixed reactions has in the recent time sparked off a national discourse on the merits and demerits of such declaration as Aminu *et al*(2021), stressed that given the continued profound loss of lives and socio-economic dislocation unleashed on Nigeria by rising insecurity, different stakeholders have reacted to the avoidable manmade menace. Some of the stakeholders including the state governors as well as the speakers of the 36 states of the federation have urged the Federal Government to declare the bandits as terrorists. The willingness to declare the bandits as terrorists will likely earn Nigerian the sympathy and support of some members of the international community and also help the Federal Government to widen and deepen its investigations regarding intelligence-gathering to be able to combat the army of terrorists. However, there are opposing views that the Federal Government should not declare the bandits as terrorists as not to attract the wrath and invasion of foreign collaborators of the bandits.

The pervasive armed banditry and its associated threats to human security in the North-West region of Nigeria, particularly, Zamfara, Kastina, Kaduna, Sokoto States and, Niger State in North-Central region, have become a subject of national security and public concern. The multifaceted layers of criminality involved, and recurrent nature of the armed banditry call for effective mechanisms to mitigate the threat it poses to peace and security in the affected states (Report of WARN, 2019). Perhaps to further underscore the severity of this overwhelming threat, Rufai (2021) revealed that there are over 10, 000 armed bandits operating across different parts of Zamfara state. These gangs have so far killed over 12,000 people and stole about 250, 000 livestock from 2011 to 2021. About 120 villages destroyed while 50, 000 people were either internally displaced or made refugees in the neighboring Niger Republic.

Basically, North-West remain volatile with armed banditry. The incessant mass abduction of school students and undergraduates in Kaduna and Kastina states where millions of naria were openly bargained and paid as ransom occasioned with killing at Nigeria Defence Academy, NDA, abduction of University of Abuja lecturers and sustained offensives against border towns and villages in Sokoto and Zamfara states are not only events of national embarrassment but portend the severity of a peculiar national security threat plaguing a fledging nation-state. Against this backdrop, this discourse examined criticality, dynamics and trends of armed banditry in North-Western, Nigeria and, most importantly its implications on national security and way forward. The analysis of this discourse is therefore structured in five sections – this introduction, conceptual explication, and spectra of armed banditry in North-West, responses to banditry, conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Explication

Nigeria’s North West, one of the country’s six geopolitical zones, comprises seven of the country’s 36 states. These are Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kastina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara. It covers an area of 216,065 sq km or 25.75 per cent of the country’s total land mass – close to the size of the UK. Its major ethnic groups are the Hausa and Fulani, who historically share strong cultural ties and are very much intermixed, with other smaller groups especially in Kaduna state. The region’s estimated population of 33 million (based on figures from the contentious 2006 census) is predominantly Muslim (Sunni). Most of the population (about 80 percent) are farmers, pastoralists, agro-pastoralists or small-scale entrepreneurs. The region has substantial solid mineral deposits, including gold exploited by artisanal miners in open pit mines. Despite its economic potential, the North West has the highest poverty rate in Nigeria. As of 2019, all seven states in the zone had poverty levels above the national average of

40.1 per cent, led by Sokoto (87.7 per cent), Jigawa (87 per cent) and Zamfara (74 per cent). Millions lack access to basic health care and clean water, and immunization coverage is far below national goals (Report of International Crisis Groups, 2020; Report of UNICEF, 2019).

While the region has a long and proud history of Islamic and Arabic scholarship, apathy toward, and inadequate investment in, formal education over the decades have contributed to a literacy rate of 29.7 per cent. The zone currently has the highest number of out-of-school children in Nigeria. On top of those who do not attend school at all, millions of children are in the poorly resourced and ill-supervised Quranic school system, or *almajiranci*, which produces cohorts of unskilled youth. The region's geography and climatic conditions pose serious challenges for federal and state authorities. Much of the North West is savannah, but the region is also interspersed with vast forests, some of which are home to thousands of mostly Fulani herders (also known as pastoralists). Once under the watch of forestry authorities, these forests gradually became hideouts for criminals including cattle rustlers, highway robbers, kidnappers and cannabis growers. In Kaduna state, locals now refer to the Kamuku forest as "Sambisa", suggesting that it has become as dangerous as the Borno state woodlands where Boko Haram established its stronghold. The region also shares about two thirds of Nigeria's 1,497km international boundary with Niger Republic, which is weakly regulated. Historical and cultural ties between communities on both sides and regional protocols on freedom of movement have created opportunities for smugglers and criminals. Numerous illegal crossings, coupled with pervasive corruption among border officials, enable the traffic of illicit merchandise such as firearms (Report of International Crisis Groups, 2020; Report of UNICEF, 2019 and Report of Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Today, the region is the cradle of armed banditry in Nigeria.

The concept of banditry is vague. However, some definitions are useful. Accordingly, it is argued that the concept has been changing over the time, space and circumstances. A bandit in the 19th century Europe and America was seen as a freedom fighter whose aim was partly to ensure the emancipation of the downtrodden from upper class or colonized over the colonizer. In pre-industrial societies, peasants see bandits differently from the state not as outlaws, hoodlums and miscreants but as "avengers". However, a bandit in traditional setting is entirely opposite to that of America and Europe, the former specialized in armed robbery and other related crime (Warto, 1994; Cricott and Fink, 2018) cited in Madubuegwu, *e tal*(2021). Succinctly, Okoli and Okpakele, 2014) cited in Ogbu, *e tal*(2017) defined armed banditry as occurrence or prevalence of armed robbery or violent crime. It involves the use of force, or threat to that effect, to intimidate a person with the intent to rob, rape or kill. Banditry is a crime against persons.

In a broader perspective to accentuate the motive and peculiarity of banditry in Nigeria, Dami (2021) opined that banditry refers to armed violence driven principally by the criminal intent to steal and plunder. It is motivated by the quest for economic accumulation. The victims are individuals and communities with material valuables. The most common examples of rural banditry in Nigeria are armed robbery, kidnapping, cattle rustling and village raids. Rural banditry in the northwestern states of Zamfara, Kaduna and Kastina has reached alarming heights in recent years. Bandits terrorize villages with impunity. They have actually settled in the Zamfara state, setting up fortified enclaves in the hinterland and on the frontiers, from where they plot and carry out their operations. Dami's submission on banditry showed discernible attributes of terrorism. In attempt to establish the affinity between armed banditry and terrorism, Aminu, *e tal* (2021), argued that the bandits and terrorists share same attribute and exhibit equally the same nuances. They inflict bodily harm, inquiry or death on their victims amidst other socio-economic dislocations such as rape, captivity, demand for ransom and assault.

Furthermore, United Nations Report (2016) and Okoli and Loryer (2014) argued that although, the causal factors for banditry and terrorism differ, both phenomenon locally thrived on exploiting the fragile or weak state capacity evident in human rights abuses, inequality, poor service provision and unemployment. While banditry, predominantly in the North-West contrasts the predominance of violent extremism in the North-East, both constitute a common thread of the overlapping nature and characteristics of organized crime as well as its mirrored impact on peace and human security in the

affected state. Beyond this, it further poses significant challenges to focused strategies to counter violent extremism which increasingly requires broader initiatives to address organised crime. For instance, cattle rustling attributed to bandits are also a strategy applied by Boko Haram to support their operations. In addition, robbery and kidnapping constitute a dominant criminal enterprise that is similar in the operations of bandits and extremist groups. Another commonality is the tactical use of difficult and often inaccessible operational terrains by state security such as the use of Sambisa forest by Boko Haram and the reported use of Falgore, Kamara, Kunduma, Sububu, Kamuku and Kiyabana forests by bandits. It offers opportunity for quick retreat and buffer for their attacks within the axis of their operations. In the light of this, the exigencies of banditry, insurgency and counter insurgency have transformed the forests areas into highly militarized area.

Emphatically, banditry in North-West is a serious threat to national security. Security as a concept has several strands embellishing in political, economic, financial, social etc. However, the most significant is the national security. Accordingly, Ighodalo (2012), indicated that national security implies the appropriation and deployment of state apparatus of coercive force to deal with situation of crisis, nationally or internationally. Human security involves protecting the citizenry from hunger, disease, poverty, unemployment, natural disasters, etc. however, all these can only take place where there is peace and stability in the polity.

Basically, national security underscores the essence of state territorial safety and defence. In other words, restive action or activity that creates climate of terror and fear among the civil population and against the institutions of the state is a potential national security threat. Again, violent action of non-state actors or state actors that threatens lives and lawful activities of the civil population is also a national security question. The emergence and onslaught of banditry against unarmed civilians, government establishments and security personnel is indeed an insurrectional action against territorial sovereignty. In this regard, critical assessment of the severity of this threat is pertinent and insightful in this discourse to identify the underlying causes, intensity and prospects.

The Spectra of Armed Banditry in North-West

Emphatically, it is instructive to note that Nigeria's North-West for nearly a decade is bedeviled with multi-faceted violence. Accordingly, ICG Report (2020) underlines the dimensions of North-West restiveness: (a) The first category includes violence pitting mainly ethnic Hausa sedentary farmers and vigilantes acting on their behalf against predominantly Fulani roving herders and associated militias. Nigerian authorities refer to the latter generically as "bandits". These militias operate in a largely decentralized manner under local commanders' autonomous control. They are motivated first and foremost by fighting on behalf of herders in their disputes with farmers, but many rogue elements have taken up criminal activities as well. (b).The second category involves violence committed by criminal gangs involved in large-scale cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, pillage, and attacks on gold miners and traders.

The authorities sometimes also refer to these gangs as "bandits" although this report describes them as "criminal" groups, gangs or organisations. These groups comprise a mix of individuals from Fulani, Hausa and other ethnic origins, and seek to enrich themselves rather than to advance a political or ideological project. These groups do not operate like militias; they are neither cohesive nor under a centralised command. They also act autonomously, sometimes in rivalry with one another. (c) The third category and most recent dimension of the violence involve confrontations between government security forces and jihadist groups that are increasingly active in the region.

Banditry is the deadliest among these dimensions of violence with fearful scale of fatalities and deaths. Accordingly, Report of WARN (2019) noted that understanding of armed banditry in Nigeria's North-West region requires examination of the historical, socioeconomic and governance contexts, as well as the conflict dynamics resulting from the interplay of farmer-herder relations pertaining to access to land resources. In a historical analysis of armed banditry in the North-West, Rufai (2021) documents that contemporary armed groups first emerged around Dan-Sadau District, Maru Local Government area in Zamfara state. The first armed group evolved in 2011, led by Kundu and the

notorious Buharin-Daji both of Fulani background. They named the group, *kungiyargayu*, meaning an association of young guys, even though none of them was a youth. The public referred to them as *kungiyarbarayinshanu* (ie cattle rustlers association), (CRA). It operated underground in the forests, but its real motive started to manifest itself in 2012, when cases of cattle rustling began in the state. Members of the gang considered it as a cultural association aimed at the liberation of the Fulani from highhandedness of security agents, traditional rulers and politicians. This is not to justify the use of arms by the bandits against the state and innocent citizens but to unveil their deep-rooted grievances.

The association was formed at a point when herders in Zamfara state were migrating to the neighboring states, due to large scale encroachment and confiscation of the grazing areas. Members of this association claimed that politicians and traditional rulers colluded in denying them access to the reserves. Initially, its members were Fulani; creating room for ethnic profiling and the criminalization of Fulani as cattle rustlers in the state. Such ethnic profiling was responsible for forcing many herders into gang. At onset, membership was restricted to the Fulani, especially during the recruitment exercise, 2011 to 2012. Recruitment was through conscription, use of cash and cows, promise for sex and leisure as well as intimidation of other Fulani people. Since, the gang was into cattle rustling, some herders joined so as to circumvent cattle rustling harassment from the members. It was alleged that some leading Fulani families in Zamfara, Sokoto and Kastina states made donations of cash and cattle, while some expressed moral support and goodwill to the members to avoid bitter consequences. In the beginning, gang members were mostly into rustling, robbery, and other minor criminalities. The change in the pattern of operations started with the creation of *Yan-Sa-kai* and the intensification of the war against members of the gangs. *Yan-Sa-kai* had unlimited power and support from their sponsors; hence, they could arrest, maim and kill an accused person without recourse to the law.

The first incident that triggered change in the course of the conflict was the brutal killing of Alhaji Isshe, in Chilin, Dan-Sadau Emirate, Maru LGA of Zamfara State. He was killed by *Yan-Sa-Kai* on 16th August, 2012 on the accusation of harboring criminals and supporting rustlers. The public murder of Isshe, was used as a justification for reprisal and mass killings of innocent people by the gang. Furthermore, late Isshe family mobilized fighters and extended invitation to the gang for reprisal attacks few days later. Members of the gang multiplied in number, strength, power and weapons and even connections in 2013. It also became more heterogeneous and transitional in 2016, constituting members from Niger Republic, Mali and Chad, mostly Tauregs with links to Sahellian rebels. The infiltration of these foreign elements transformed the gang in several ways. New members were recruited, more weapons were introduced and fighters were trained in modern guerilla strategies and tactics. Kidnapping and abduction for ransom was adopted as a new strategy in addition to cattle rustling. Large numbers of poverty-stricken youths across villages were used as informants supplying intelligence for awesome pecuniary rewards. Furthermore, there was a change in strategy of the violence from cattle rustling to the raiding of villages, kidnapping and other related Gender and Sexual Based Violence (GSBV) across Zamfara, Sokoto and Kaduna States. Armed violence reached its climax in 2018 with proliferation of more gangs (Rufai, 2021; Bello and Ibrahim, 2021).

In a similar perspective, Dami (2021), indicated that Nigeria's Northwest is gradually becoming another major regional theatre of violence, much like the Northeast where Boko Haram terrorists have wreaked havoc in the past ten years. A problem, which initially appeared as localized disputes between herders and farmers over access to land, has morphed into an intractable crisis posing a major threat to national and regional security. The level of rural banditry escalated between 2014 and 2019 attracting a lot of attention, while assuming increased political undertones in the run-up to the 2019 Nigerian elections. In Zamfara and parts of neighboring Kastina state in the Northwest, rampaging gangs of armed bandits have engaged in violent acts, attacking, abducting, killing, and robbing villagers and travelers, and engaging in cattle rustling. Although sometimes exaggerated or underestimated by some political actors, casualty figures are quite alarming. The former Governor of Zamfara state, Abdulaziz Yari, is reported to have said that nearly five hundred villages and thirteen thousand hectares of land have been devastated, and two thousand eight hundred and thirty five people killed between 2011 and 2018. It is also estimated that there are at least ten thousand armed

bandits and cattle rustlers operating out of eight major camps in Zamfara state. Also, some reports put the number of children orphaned as a result of such attacks at forty four thousand since 2010. In Anka Local Government Area of the state, over sixteen thousand people have been internally displaced.

Beside cattle rustling and killings, the bandits for more than 16 months had profited enormously in mass abduction of school students and undergraduates in Kastina, Kaduna and Zamfara states of the federation. In this vein, the following are recent incidents of abduction of school children and undergraduates by bandits in North-West and North-Central regions of the federation; (a) December, 15, 2020, bandits invaded Government Science Secondary School, GSSS Kankara in Katsina state and abducted 344 students. (b) February, 17, 2021, bandits invaded Government College in Kagara, Niger State and abducted 42 students including 3 teachers and 9 family members while one student was killed in the raid. (c) February, 26, 2021, armed bandits raided Government Girls Science Secondary School in Jangebe in Zamfara state and abducted 279 female students. (d) March 11, 2021, bandits struck at Federal College of Forestry Mechanization, Afaka, Kaduna State and abducted 39 students. (e) April 20, 2021, bandits struck at Greenfield University, a private institution located in Kasarachi, Chikun local government area of Kaduna state and abducted 23 students while 5 of them were murdered. (f) July 5, 2021, 140 students of Bethel High School in Kaduna State were abducted after bandits opened fire and overpowered security guards of the school. The list of abductions is endless as the bandits continue their onslaught with little or no resistance from the security agencies. It is however important to note that some of the abducted students in some of these incidents have regained their freedom after millions of naria were paid as ransom to these bandits (Madubuegwu, *et al*, 2021).

Subsequently, it is pertinent to note that these bandits are not invisible. They are well known within the communities of operation. Instead of arrest and prosecution, they were rather covertly engaged by agents of the state to bargain on ransom for abducted victims. For instance, the viral video clip of a popular clergy in Kaduna bargaining with bandits for the freedom of abducted school students in early 2021 sparks off mixed reactions among Nigerians. The visibility of these bandits is further underscored in the table below:

Table 1.1: MAJOR BANDIT LEADERS IN THE NORTHWEST AND AREAS OF OPERATIONS

S/N	Armed Groups	Locations
1.	Abubakar Abdullah (Dogo Gide).	Kaduna and Niger States.
2.	Yellow Jan-Bros.	Birinm Gwari Forest & Giwa areas of Kaduna State.
3.	Tsoho Manjagara.	Giwa local government, Kaduna State.
4.	Alhaji Bodere and AlhajiBeleri.	Sabon Birni, Giwa local government, Kaduna State.
5.	Yellow Ashana.	Sabon Garin Gyadam, Kaduna State.
6.	Ali Kawaje (Ali Kachalla).	Birnin Gwari, Kaduna.
7.	Alhaji Isiya, Buhari General & Gannaie	Kaduna-Abuja Highway, Kaduna.
8.	Alhaji Ado Aleru	Yan-Kuzo in Chafe local government area as well as some parts of Kastina and Zamfara States.
9.	Lanke, Umar Bango, Yahaya, Kabir.	Dan Rumfa village in Jibya local government area.
10.	Auwalun Daudawa	Safana Dan-Musa and Batsari local government area, Kastina.
11.	Dangottee Bamfare	Along Katsina and Zamfara.
12.	Alhaji Auta, Adro Na-Shaware, Ado Nashama and Alhaji Shingi	Birmni Magaji local government area, Zamfara state.
13.	Dankarami	Zurmni local government area, Zamfara.
14.	Alhaji Shehu Rekep and Alhaji Halilu.	Tsafe, Maru and Anka local government area, Zamfara state.
15.	Manu, D O.	Birnin Gawri and Giwa areas of Kaduna state.
16.	Saleh Piya-Piya	Anchau Kaduna State.
17.	Bello Turji	Shinkali/Isa and Sabon Birnin.

Source: Adapted from Rufai, (2021: 25).

Armed criminality and conflict is a function of dialectical variables. As related to the onslaught of bandits, WARN Report (2019), documents that ecological changes and climate-induced pressures have increased conflicts in the agro-pastoral sector. The phenomenon also has linkages to banditry and governance challenges. Factors that drive banditry in the region such as cattle rustling, illicit artisanal gold mining, proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), youth unemployment, inequality and poverty, indicates a weak governance and security capacities across the states. Another factor is endemic poverty, the ultimate aftermath of financial impropriety and recklessness of our leaders is widespread poverty in the land, while a few privileged individuals who looted our commonwealth are daily parading themselves in affluence and are so celebrated by the society. Today, majority of Nigerian citizens live below poverty line of one Dollar per day, suffer from decayed infrastructure, lack access to medical services, qualitative and affordable education, safe drinking water and sanitation, etc. Average Nigerians daily live in unpredictable and hopeless conditions. Weak Correctional Agencies, The strength of police and other policing agencies in Nigeria to prevent the occurrence of crime before they are committed and detect or arrest crimes when committed have inhibited the control of crime and by extension encouraged criminal activities in the country. The popular perception of Nigerians is that, the policing agencies have failed the nation in protecting lives and property (Dami, 2021).

In addition, youth unemployment is also a trigger to banditry. It is estimated that over 20 million youths (between 20-40 years age bracket) were not gainfully employed in the six states of the North-West zone occasioned with poor literacy rate. These conditions predisposed these young people to criminalities. Majority of them serves in different layers (informants, drugs, transportation, food vendor) of banditry industry in Zamfara, Kaduna and Kastina. In addition, Rufai (2021), stressed that politicians in Zamfara state sponsored and armed some youths as political thugs to achieve their ambition in 2011. The youth were abandoned after winning the election, who then went into drug abuse, cattle stealing, robbery and later transformed into armed gangs attacking villages. The first motorbikes used in the attacks were donations from politicians during elections campaign. Secondly is deep rooted injustice against the pastoral communities. *Kungiyar Gayuis* the first armed group which emerged in 2011. Its initial aim as claimed by some of the founding fathers was to ensure the unity of pastoralists and struggle for social justice. Their perception was that the pastoral communities in the state were subjected to all forms of extortion and deprivation from different agencies. For instance, when a pastoralist was involved in any squabble with a farmer, the case would usually delay unnecessarily. The accused Fulani, known to have a phobia for courts and their unwarranted justice delay, would be ready to bribe his way out of the court. Third is the illicit miming argument which sees the rise of the conflict from the perspective of the struggle amongst the miners each with the aim of getting an upper hand in the competition. Zamfara State is one of the few states in the Northwest blessed with huge gold deposits mostly exploited by foreign illicit miners, Chinese, Russians, and the South Africans in collaboration with local artisanal miners. The foreign firms were accused of supplying arms to the locals against their rival group. For instance, Helicopters were often seen exchanging weapons for gold and, whenever and wherever these helicopters were spotted in an area, then no distance time there could be bloodshed. These atrocities were allegedly committed with the support of some traditional and political leaders (who have interests in the mining enterprise) within and outside Zamfara State.

Again, the proliferation of arms and light weapons also contributed in the rapidity of banditry in North-West, Nigeria. It is recalled that UN Report (2012) disclosed that about 875 million of such weapons produced by over 1,000 companies in 100 countries are in circulation worldwide. Nigeria's share is between 7 and 8 million in West Africa. It is in the league of countries with high prevalence of illegal firearms like South Africa, Yemen and the United States where the quantity of small arms in civilian hands is 5.95 million, 11.5 million and 270 million respectively. Ten years later, today, the statistics of arms and weapons in the hands of armed groups has increased tremendously.

In the North Western states, armed bandits have generated huge capital from many outlets, which are handsomely in arms procurement and intelligent gathering. Through their contacts across the

Sahel, particularly Libya and Mali, they supply arms which were ferried across the ever-increasing porous borders located in the North-West. Beside these notable individuals, there are a couple of middlemen and retailers of arms across different forests in the region. An informant reveals that 'getting foodstuff' in the camp is more difficult than acquiring an 'AK47'. Members could sell or even rent out weapon to someone but could not give him food to eat''. Thus, the arms business is an industry of its own in the forests and camps. There are members that do not go out for operation but, only remain in the camps to rent guns and sell ammunitions to members. Sometimes, this class of arm dealers made more money than the field fighters. Aging and incapacitated gang leaders could retire and become gunrunners or renters. Largely scale operations were mostly and largely done or even led by the gang-heads. What is ironical about these bandits is that although they are united for same purpose, they are paradoxically divided along difficult camps. Thus, the quest for more sophisticated weapons was not largely motivated by the fashion for attack and killings, but largely against rival groups. The deadlier a gang's weapons, the more fearful it becomes within the crime circle (Rufai, 2021). Rufai's findings as revealing and instructive further underlined the intricate dynamics of banditry in Nigeria. To this end, what are the effects of banditry?

Violence in north-western Nigeria has claimed thousands of lives over the last decade. Reliable figures for fatalities across the entire region are hard to come by, given that much of the violence has occurred in remote rural communities and therefore has never been reported by either the mass media or security agencies. As earlier indicated, however, from 2011 to 2019, at least 8,000 people were killed, mostly in Zamfara state, with the bulk of the casualties occurring over the last five years. Hundreds remain missing or unaccounted for. The crisis has also triggered a humanitarian challenge. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced. In September 2019, a joint assessment mission by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons, citing local government authorities' estimates, reported 210,354 persons displaced from 171 towns and villages in the North West. Of these, 144,996 were in Zamfara state, 35,941 in Sokoto and 29,417 in Kastina. About 60,000 of the displaced have also fled over the border to Niger Republic where the same insecurity along border areas has resulted in 19,000 Nigeriens internally displaced. On 22 February 2020, the government of the Nigerian state of Niger (which shares borders with Zamfara, Kebbi and Kaduna states), reported that violence had displaced 10,000 people from communities in ten of the state's 25 local government areas.

In March 2021, the National Emergency Management Agency reported 105,463 people displaced in Sokoto state. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) living conditions are appalling, characterized by irregular and inadequate food distribution, crude shelters, and poor health and sanitation services. As there is no officially recognized IDP camp in Zamfara and Kastina states, many internally displaced are in makeshift camps or scattered in towns and villages away from home, which obscures the scale of displacement. The IDPs' plight is compounded by the near absence of humanitarian actors from affected areas, largely due to significant underestimation of the violence's scale and impact, but also because insecurity limits access for needs assessment in certain places. In 2019, three organisations – Pastoral Resolve, Search for Common Ground and Terre des Hommes – supported by the French embassy in Abuja, conducted a multi-sectoral needs assessment for Zamfara state, but there has been no comprehensive assessment for the entire region. With many humanitarian organisations already overstretched by the demands in Nigeria's North East, the overall humanitarian response in the North West remains patchy and grossly inadequate (Report of ICG, 2020; UNHCR Report, 2019; UNHCR Report, 2020; Momale and Uperas, 2019).

Again, Rufai (2018) also revealed that that armed banditry facilitated the emergence of a complex informal security sector in the region, including the growth of armed local vigilante groups established to protect communities against bandits. Many of these groups lack adequate security training and often compete against one another. They have been implicated in acts of criminality including human rights abuses, armed robbery, extortion and appropriation of livestock and other properties from both bandits and their victims, which led a public commentator to label their activities as 'legalised armed banditry'. Subsequently, the criminal activities perpetuated by bandits in the North West heightened the

vulnerability of women and girls in the region. Some women in the affected communities were faced with early widowhood or death of their children, while some children were orphaned and forced to flee their villages for safety. This remains a critical human security concern as they also suffer varied forms of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV). Several cases of rape by bandits were reported in Kastina and Niger State.

There were reports of SGBV amongst the displaced. In a field assessment conducted in Zamfara State, using 'Focus Group Discussion' (FGD), community members and leaders had highlighted high incidence of SGBV including rape and forced marriage specifically targeted at women and young girls due to the presence and activities of bandits in rural areas. Further reports have revealed that the highest risk faced by children in the affected communities is abduction, as majority of the children are abducted for ransom while female children are abducted for sex and others for child labour. This mostly occurred when collecting firewood, on the way to the market or during village attacks. Despite being victims of violence, women were also perpetrators. They disguise as food vendors to provide bandits with information and are also suppliers/carriers of weapons, drugs and other basic needs for the bandits (Report of WARN, 2019).

Education deprivation in the North-West region has been exacerbated by armed banditry due to the mass displacements in affected communities. However, the escalation of banditry contributed to a high number of out-of-school children in the region. Out of the 10.5 million out-of-school children in Nigeria, 30 percent are in the North-West (Zamfara, Kastina, Sokoto, Kebbi, Kano) and Niger States in the North Central region. Besides, insecurity in the communities had a negative impact on young boys and girls, as school activities in vulnerable areas were disrupted. The few existing schools were unable to operate properly for fear of kidnap of students or attacks and killing by bandits. Parents prevented their children from attending schools due to insecurity on major roads. This in turn increased the job turnover of teachers in these communities (Mohammed, 2020, Garba, *e tal*, 2021 and Umar, 2020). Also, Aminu, *e tal*(2021) embellished that the violent attacks by bandits on schools have no doubt forced many children to shun them, especially in most vulnerable parts of the North. Today, the level of misfortune of hundreds of schools in Nigeria where attacks and abductions of school children, teachers and officials for ransom payments running into hundreds of millions of naria have reduced the education sector to a parlous state of ignoble.

This means going back to school for many children or for parents/guardians in states such as Borno, Kaduna, Kastina, Zamfara and Niger, among others, for their vulnerability to attacks, will not be business as usual or taken lightly. This insecurity as threat to education has not only pummeled school enrolment with children withdrawing from school in droves, it definitely will water down the quest to cut down the figure of out-of-school children (10.5 million) in the country, which UNICEF puts as the highest in the Sub-Saharan African region. As is commonly the case, children are better-off attending school and being able to learn better in a completely safe and conducive learning environment. But, this cannot be said to be so in the context of a country that is under the full grip of insecurity, when over 1, 436 school children have been abducted and 16 killed in the various attacks carried out on many schools in the North-West and North-East by bandits. It is more worrisome that primary and secondary school students in Kaduna State, according to the Commissioner for Education, have to lose the whole third term of the last school year due to forceful closure of all schools in the state due to incessant attacks and abductions. The closure of the schools by the Kaduna State Government for several months and other state governments in the region for fear of being attacked is a right step taken to protect the children in the face of lack of the security machinery to safeguard the school children and teachers.

To illuminate economic impact of banditry in North-West, it is argued that, the violence has deeply unsettled the economy. Agriculture, on which about 80 per cent of the population depends for livelihoods, has been particularly hard hit. For several years, farmers in the affected areas have been abandoning their fields for fear of attack or kidnapping. In Zamfara state, over 13,000 hectares of farmland have been either destroyed or rendered inaccessible as a result of attacks by herder-allied armed groups and criminal gangs. In Sokoto state, the State Emergency Management Agency reports

that as of October 2019, some 21,316 hectares of farmland across five local government areas remained uncultivated, as 80,000 intimidated farmers stayed away. Huge numbers of livestock have similarly been lost. From 2011 to 2019, about 141,360 cattle and 215,241 sheep were rustled in Zamfara state, for example. These disruptions have impoverished farmers and herders alike, created food shortages in some communities, and aggravated malnutrition particularly among children.

In April 2020, Niger state Governor Abubakar Sani Bello warned: “We are heading toward famine and starvation”. Commerce has been similarly disrupted. Thousands of shops and other businesses in north-western Nigeria are in ruins or have shut down due to direct attacks and kidnappings of businessmen, which have fed rising fears of insecurity. Significant private property has been lost: as of April 2019, Zamfara state reported “more than 10,000 houses, shops and silos” destroyed. With road travel hazardous, local traders are afraid to transport farm produce to markets. Investor confidence has also plunged. In May 2019, the National Trade Fair hosted by the state of Niger’s government recorded a very poor turnout, a situation that the president of the state’s Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture, Abdulkadir Hassan, attributed to would-be participants’ fears of bandit attacks and kidnapping. The disposable income of relatively wealthy families in the area has also declined: in Zamfara, the number of people who can afford to go on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina plummeted from an average of about 4,500 in previous years to 1,500 in 2019 (ICG Report, 2020, Mohammed, 2020 and Umar, 2020).

The scale of devastating effects of banditry in the North-West is overwhelming and deteriorating in intensity of killings and abductions. As earlier noted, it appears that the government and state institutions are overwhelmed, however, there were genuine measures initiated to ensure safety of the civil population amid obvious inadequacies and challenges.

Responses to Banditry in North-West

Acknowledging the strident threat of armed banditry to national security, The Report of ICG (2020) documents that Nigerian federal government and the governments of the North West states have been responding in various ways to the region’s violence. These responses have ranged from security and enforcement measures against all “bandit” groups, including herder-allied armed groups and criminal gangs, to offers of amnesty to some herder-allied groups. Thus far, the measures have achieved limited results. The federal government’s attempts to contain armed groups in the North West have largely depended on the security forces. Since 2016, the federal police have launched several “anti-banditry” operations, focusing on herder-allied armed groups and roving criminal gangs. Starting in 2016, the army has also expanded troop presence in the region, converting the Falgore forest in Kano state into a permanent training ground, establishing three new forward operating bases in that forest and in the Kafanchan and Kachia local government areas of Kaduna state, and launching five operations under “anti-banditry” mandates. The air force, which has become increasingly involved since 2017, has also deployed new units (including Special Forces personnel) and, since 2018, conducted numerous aerial operations targeting forest encampments of herder-allied armed groups and criminal groups.

The government has sought closer security cooperation with Niger Republic. In September 2018, the two neighbors set up a joint military border patrol team. During the same month, Nigerian air force aircraft targeted armed groups in Niger’s Maradi region, in a bid to rescue Nigerian hostages held in the Dumbroun area. In May 2019, a joint security team from the Nigerian army’s 8th Division, based in Sokoto, met with their Nigerien counterparts and discussed cross-border security strategies. Military operations arguably have had an impact. The army and police have arrested hundreds of men suspected of being part of herder-allied armed groups and criminal gangs, killed hundreds of others, destroyed some of their forest camps, recovered arms and ammunition, and rescued hundreds of kidnapped persons. More recently, the police conducted operations in which it reported killing hundreds of roving armed group elements and Ansaru members.

Also, other non-militarised responses have accompanied the Government's anti-banditry operations in the region. In May 2019, the Nigerian Army banned the use of motorcycles within the hinterland and forests of Zamfara, Kastina, Sokoto, Kaduna, Kebbi, Kano and Niger States. Also, the

Federal Government suspended all mining activities in Zamfara State to enable it deal particularly with illicit gold mining, considered to be at the heart of the wanton killings in Zamfara State. Beginning from 2018, establishment of cattle colonies and development of a National Livestock Transformation Plan were proposed as long-term solutions to cattle rustling and incessant clashes between farmers and herders. Though the Government argued that the policy would address cattle rustling, douse agro-pastoral conflicts and improve agricultural productivity, its implementation has been hampered by ethno-religious and politically tensed objections and criticisms from some quarters of the country who have questioned the usefulness and effectiveness of the policy (Report of WARN, 2019).

To synergize more meaningfully with the federal authorities, it was reported that the following efforts were initiated; (a) From 2015, state governments responded to increasing violence in the North West mostly by supporting federal security agencies with funds and logistics to fight the armed groups, diminishing their ability to address other pressing socioeconomic problems. In Zamfara state, former Governor Yari reported that from 2015 to 2019, the government spent 35 billion naira (about \$95.8 million) on logistics support to federal security agencies, special allowances for security personnel deployed to the state and relief for victims of attacks. In Kastina state, the government has reported similar but lower expenditures (Zamfara Bulletin, 2019). (b) State governments also sought to counter attacks by herder-allied groups and criminal gangs by forming and empowering vigilantes to protect communities, a practice that proved to be largely counterproductive. In 2013, the Zamfara state government recruited about 12,500 vigilantes, paid them a monthly allowance of about 2,250 naira and provided them logistical support until the end of 2014. Additionally, in November 2018, as violence continued to escalate, the state government, frustrated by what it called the Nigerian army's "lackadaisical attitude" toward confronting the armed actors, formed a Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), recruiting a first batch of 8,500 young men, and subsequently increasing the number (Kabuiru, 2020:231, Zamfara Bulletin, 2019).

More recently, Report of ICG (2020) observed that over the last twelve months, the North West zone's state governments have initiated new efforts to negotiate peace with mainly herder-allied armed groups, but also vigilantes and criminals; this strategy has delivered some gains although not enough to end the violence. The new policy direction followed growing public frustration with federal security agencies' apparent inability to subdue the armed groups through the use of military force, despite President Buhari's repeated vows to do so. Nor have tighter laws relating to the control of armed groups and violent crime had substantial effect, given the states' lack of enforcement capacity. Consequently, the Zamfara, Kastina, Sokoto and Niger state governments have engaged in dialogues with predominantly herder-allied armed group leaders, with some governors going out to meet them in their forest camps or inviting them to talks in the state capital. The governors offered the armed groups amnesties and other incentives to end attacks. These talks produced several agreements. In July 2019, the Zamfara state government said it had persuaded some herder-allied armed groups to end violence; Kastina, Niger and Sokoto states followed with similar announcements.

The governments agreed to release all former armed elements who had been part of herder-allied groups, and who were now in custody, in exchange for all persons the herders were holding in their forest camps. The governors also pledged to disarm and disband vigilante groups (a strong demand of herder-allied armed groups), rehabilitate and re-integrate herder-allied and other armed groups willing to lay down their arms, establish rural grazing areas including settlements with social amenities – schools, hospitals, roads, electricity and water – for Fulani pastoralists, and rehabilitate houses destroyed by violence between herder-allied groups and farmers. The agreements have been at least partly honored. The Zamfara and Kastina state governments have since released detained herder-allied armed actors. They also banned vigilantes' activities and ordered them to disarm, an order that has achieved substantial albeit not total compliance. Vigilantes surrendered significant numbers of weapons, partly because they wanted to encourage their better-armed herder-allied rivals to lay down their weapons, too, but also because, as sedentary farmers, they would be more vulnerable to government security operations than itinerant herders. For their part, some herder-allied armed groups have also put down their weapons, helping cool tensions and reduce attacks through the last quarter

of 2019. About 500 persons who had been held captive, mostly by herder-allied armed groups and criminal groups but also by vigilantes, were subsequently released. Many displaced people, including the Fulani who had fled into forests for fear of vigilante attacks, have gone home. In Zamfara, the State Emergency Management Agency reported that as of 30 August 2019, about 25,000 displaced persons had returned to their towns and villages – and more have since followed.

Currently, the Zamfara and Kaduna state governments have adopted a new security checks against armed bandits by cutting off all channels of telecommunications. It is anticipated that the security measure shall frustrate the activities of the armed groups. However, despite these gains, there are still obvious challenges. For instance, the Federal Government's counter banditry interventions in the North-West region was based on the deployment of Police and Military operations to the troubled States under several operational codenames such as '*Operations Puff Adder*', '*Diran Mikiya*', '*Sharan Daji*', '*Hadarin Daji*', '*Thunder Strike*' and '*Exercise Harbin Kunama 111*'. Nonetheless, the security response had largely elicited mixed result. While, the security forces have successfully pushed back bandits, destroyed hide outs with hundreds of bandits killed or arrested. However, bandit related killings and kidnapping have continued more intensely in Zamfara, Kastina and Niger states. Also many impacted communities remain deserted, with some of the displaced unable to return home due to fear of a resurgence in attacks and a perception of unguaranteed safety in view of the capacity challenges faced by security agencies in fighting armed bandits (Report of WARN, 2019).

Again, security forces have been unable to subdue the vast array of armed groups. Even with the stepped-up efforts, the available manpower, logistics and equipment are insufficient to respond promptly to armed groups' attacks. Troops lack the motorcycles they need to travel on roads that are impassable for cars and trucks. The army also lacks sufficient helicopters to deploy troops rapidly to remote locations. Locals said that although military operations (Operations Harbin Kunama I and II) expelled many criminal groups from their forest camps in 2016 and early 2017, the army failed to consolidate those gains and hold territory, enabling the groups to soon reorganise and return. Many vulnerable rural communities are far from any military post, resulting in late responses to their distress calls, with soldiers sometimes reaching them many hours after attacks. Others under attack are sometimes unable to reach security agencies due to poor telephone services. The government's April 2019 attempt to prohibit all forms of gold mining in Zamfara state, citing possible links between miners and criminals, has also had limited impact. Authorities have struggled to enforce the ban because of the remote location of many mining sites, limited resources for monitoring compliance and resistance by some powerful individuals behind the industry.

Moreover, to the extent that enforcement exists, its immediate impact has been to deprive thousands of artisanal miners and their dependents of livelihoods, creating a new set of problems. Some miners from the North West have relocated to Osun state in south-western Nigeria, over 700km away, where they are again engaged in mining; others have not. In the absence of other livelihoods, the ban could render many unemployed youths more vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups and criminals. As related to local vigilantes, the army, viewed the CJTF as potentially parallel force, and unwilling to work with it. Secondly, the poorly armed vigilantes were often no match for these armed bandits they were meant to confront. Hundreds of vigilantes were killed in the course of the many confrontations in Zamfara and Kastina. Also, the efforts of the states are constrained because the herder-allied and criminal gangs lack central command and a common goal, it has been difficult to bring them all to a common conference table, and agreements made with one group are not binding on others. Again, these dialogues initiated by state governments have largely focused on herder-allied armed groups, with the criminally motivated bandit groups and jihadists showing no interest in engaging with authorities. Also, these dialogues appear not to have taken adequate account of the views of local communities that have borne the brunt of violence and expect the state to deliver forms of compensation, justice and protection as a condition for durable peace. In addition, three states in the North West region – Kaduna, Kano and Kebbi – have not yet engaged in similar peace processes, which could motivate herder-allied and criminal groups in those states to step up their attacks to force those governments to the table. In Kaduna state, the government has vowed never to negotiate with any

armed group, attacks continue to take a significant toll till date (Kabuiru, 2020:233, ICG Report, 2020, Mohammed, 2020).

Integrative response approaches that require a combination of conflict management mechanisms such as consultation of actors and communities affected, dialogue, community policing, amnesty, reconciliation and security reforms by the respective state Governments is key to the mitigation of banditry in the North-West. For instance, the peace initiatives through the amnesty program launched in 2016 by the Kastina State Government as well as the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) effort by Zamfara State Government are laudable efforts. However, these lacked strong security and alternative conflict management strategies which would have ensured the stability of security beyond the amnesty and the DDR process. The initial positive results from the peace initiative succeeded in convincing several herdsmen and bandits to surrender arms to the State Government in return for amnesty while large weapons withdrawal and destruction program occurred in Zamfara State in 2018 with 6,000 manufactured guns destroyed. However, the momentum was not sustained as armed banditry, cattle rustling, kidnapping, culpable homicide and other related crimes resumed in the same year, 2018 with a higher level of intensity (Report of WARN, 2019).

Also, the telecommunication security measure adopted by Zamfara and Kaduna state governments has come under strident criticisms. For instance, Yusuf Haruna, retired chief superintendent of police, CSP and security expert in recent interview, lamented

Now, in Zamfara State, they now adopted the system of cutting off all the means of communication. Again, I wonder, because in all the books I have read, I have not seen where keeping people in incommunicado has proffered solution to a high crime like terrorism in any part of the world. Yes, you might think that you want to cut off the bandits from communicating with the source of getting food, the source of water, and other things, but at the same time, once you cut off these terrorists, you would have dispossessed yourself of the natural intelligence that you would have gotten from people. May be, people who were present when they were planning, or who saw the criminals passing by, or a farmer who has a telephone who could also call the police or relations about what he had seen; how do they pass message? So, you have also cut off even the security agencies from getting timely information, or what we call actionable information. Security agencies themselves are being cut off from communicating with each other. How will the security agencies share information? They have to go and converge in one place? I mean the world has grown beyond that. You have to pull somebody from location where he's a protection officer to come and receive briefing only for you to go back and discover that the entire people he's supposed to protect have been wiped out. So, my fear now is that the real vulnerable citizens who are at the suburbs, and the communities, majority of them might be killed before these telephone lines are reopened because the bandits have their targets and plans(Adekunbi,2021).

Sadly, Yusuf's apprehension manifested with recent abduction of 50 worshippers by armed bandits at a local church in Kaduna. It was alleged that the operation lasted for an hour....no call to draw the attention of security men.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Armed banditry is indeed an enormous challenge to the security and development of the North-West. As earlier noted, the rapidity of its spread and intensity amid government responses overwhelms and deteriorate national security crisis (emanating from Boko Haram-ISWAP terrorism in the North-East and Fulani herders' menace in North-Central and South-West, and unknown gunmen insurgency in South-East). cursory review of field-reports and findings as embellished in thematic analysis of the discourse revealed frightening incidents and situations that undoubtedly shown that armed banditry is a new dimension of terrorism in Nigeria with the intent to further destabilize the North and perhaps extend to South if not checked or mitigated. Though their operations is limited in isolation of central

or unitary command structure but heavily infiltrated by criminal elements from neighboring sovereign states and enjoy robust sponsorship in Nigeria and foreign countries. The discourse introduced the crux of the study, illuminate the geo-descriptive analysis of the North-West, conceptualize banditry and national security, and illustrate the affinity between banditry and terrorism. Subsequently, the discourse extensively dissected the history, dynamics, effects and responses of armed banditry in the North-West. Suffice to state that federal and state governments have done quite a lot in kinetic and non-kinetic measures to effectively tackle the menace of armed criminal gangs operating in the region.

However, the following recommendation is instructively complementary in the ongoing efforts for plausible measures to stem the tides of banditry in the North-West. (a) There is need for “National Security Summit on Banditry in North-West” to leverage on resourceful knowledge from empirical study of field reports, submissions of security practitioners, inputs from rehabilitated bandits, experiences of countries and relevant information from global specialized agencies for holistic approach to respond more efficiently and effectively. (b) The office of National Security Adviser, NSA, Federal Ministry of Defence and Nigeria Intelligence Agency in collaboration with Department of State Security Service, DSS and Police Commands in Zamfara, Kastina, Kaduna and Sokoto states along with their respective representatives should synergize to review the operational response (identifying inadequacies, limitations and prospects) and develop a blue-print for effective inter-agency collaboration in strategic response to armed banditry in North-West. (c) The intelligent operational mechanisms should concentrate in identifying and neutralizing the supply sources (such as weapons, drugs, food, cash and other logistics) of the bandits. This measure will further expose the vulnerabilities of these armed groups and criminal gangs. (d) The federal government through its appropriate institutions and collaboration with the West should identify, arrest, extradite (where necessary) and prosecute sponsors of armed banditry in North-West region. That ‘political will’ shall certainly facilitate the extermination of banditry in Northern region. (e) Massive deployment of modern technology to track communication and locations of bandits. This measure will bolster operational response to banditry. (f) The state House of Assembly in North-West should enact law to criminalize banditry. This measure will serve as deterrence as more efforts are needed to sustain the Amnesty Programme and rehabilitation of repentant bandits. (g) The state governments in North-West should not relent in working in collaboration with traditional rulers, rural vigilante and religious clerics on way forward for security. (h) The state governments in Zamfara, Kastina, Sokoto and Kaduna in collaboration with the Military authorities build military depots including deployment of aircraft offensives in forests hitherto used by the bandits as base to plan and launch attacks. (i) The state governments in Zamfara, Kastina, Sokoto and Kaduna should deploy resources to state emergency agencies and collaborate with national emergency agency and global humanitarian agencies to resettle thousands of internally displaced persons, IDPs and provide food, clothes, medical service and ensure adequate supply of water and other essential services to refugee camps. Also, the need for the rehabilitation of access roads to these camps, and security of government personnel and global humanitarian practitioners.

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