Weak Border Management and Banditry in the Northwest Region, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Strong border management in Nigeria's Northwest shows critical weaknesses through the continuous growth of banditry in the area. This study traces the links between deficient border management systems through border weak points and rising criminal offenses by showing how border weaknesses together with inadequate monitoring and corruption and inadequate institutional response create spaces for border criminals. Using both qualitative and quantitative data, the study utilized tables, figures and content analysis to demonstrate how unregulated borders allow weapons and illegal goods to move freely with armed groups which leads to escalated violence and economic turmoil and threatened national security. Research demonstrates that banditry spreads because border security infrastructure remains inadequate and technological assets are insufficient along with weak interactions between border agencies and their respective communities. The study maintains that banditry control efforts will fail to bear substantial results unless government institutions conduct far-reaching reforms which include better monitoring techniques and strengthened guardian networks linking authorities across states along with strong coordination between different agencies and skilled development of public institutions for role fulfillment. The document supports border security through three-step solutions that merge technological progress with regional defense alliances and community-centered development to tackle border insecurity bases.

INTRODUCTION

Since gaining independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have continued to experience violence and instability, primarily as a result of previous and current leaders' inability to adequately manage and/or lessen the factors that contribute to regional conflict (Ezeibe, n.d). The threats faced by Nigeria surpass those experienced by all other countries in African territory (Abraham et al., 2024). The unregulated condition of Nigerian borders allows illegitimate migration of people who come from neighboring states such as the Republic of Niger, Chad, and the Republic of Benin (Edet & Chinazaekpere, 2021). Nigeria finds itself unable to control its borders effectively because the country has borders which are easily accessible and numerous regions without governance. The country faces difficulties in stopping the spread of arms and ammunition acquisition by bandits and kidnappers owing to this phenomenon (Usman & Singh, 2021).

Terrorism functions as Nigeria's foremost challenge because religious extremism adds to its porous national border while creating broad border security problems and criminal activity. Unregulated border activities and porous border controls have long contributed to Nigerian border security problems through crimes with no identified countermeasures (Udosen & Uwak, 2021). Unregulated growth and abundant entrance in the country has resulted in insurgency and armed banditry together with kidnapping and corruption problems that became security's primary concern in Nigeria. According to Udosen and Uwak (2021) armed banditry has developed into a profound and complex national security issue for the country.

The bandit activity in Nigeria developed into a crime operation worth millions of naira and researchers studied it through historical timeline (Chris et al., 2021). Banditry occurs through the collective formation of armed groups to attack official state institutions or social enterprises or individual persons where bandit activity equals taking part in these strikes (Agu & Ugada, 2024). The problema of banditry remains uncontrolled in the

way that it evolved into an important aspect of society throughout North West Nigeria (Abraham et al., 2024). The geographic region of North West stands on the boundary of Sahel and now functions as the main center of active banditry activities. Research records demonstrate approximately 100 years of banditry history showing increased frequency when governments lose control or vacant power positions (Osasona, 2023b).

Market analysts suggest the rising crime issue stems from criminal groups entering the country. The alarming series of phenomena which includes cattle rustling, killings, kidnapping, raping and arson (Abraham et al., 2024) has driven the recent surge in armed banditry that now poses the greatest national security threat to Nigeria (Brenner, 2021; Campbell, 2020). The government should maintain ongoing investment in border management reforms while simultaneously boosting the capacity of border and migration management systems to guarantee their effectiveness and efficiency. Such actions would serve as a major accomplishment under the Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration according to the International Organisation for Migration (International Organisation for Migration, n.d).

Through its UN security initiatives the United Nations has established multiple resolutions and conventions and protocols which create an international legal framework to enhance Identity Management and previously mentioned components (International Organisation for Migration, n.d). The state requires implementation of air, land, sea, virtual border management together with interior management, returns management and visa management and special security environment border management systems to control weak border management (Nigeria Immigration Service, 2019). A state reaches effective border control by implementing both identity management and proper border management information systems in addition to integrated border management and humanitarian border management (International Organisation for Migration, n.d). The Justice Aniagolu Tribunal documentation provided the initial official acknowledgment of border management essentiality for nationwide development in Nigeria (Nigeria Immigration Service, 2019). The Tribunal concluded that the extensive unstaffed and insecure national border system enabled unwanted persons to enter easily into Nigeria (Nigeria Immigration Service, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Eselebor and Kehinde (2020) Nigeria faces substantial security threats because of porous borders that create uninterrupted threats to her national security. According to their research the security position and general welfare of any state depend on border incidents therefore border oversight stands as a crucial element for state survival through both peace and stability. Omotuyi (2024) dedicated his research to investigating the practices of oil smuggling along with borderland and border management in the Nigerian context. Border management in Nigeria faces doubts about its performance because transborder smuggling continues without interruption after border restrictions were implemented. The research demonstrates border policing inadequacy in controlling smuggling while showing that border monitoring strategies succeed only after smuggling gangs lose their connections with compromised border inspectors at crossing points (Omotuyi, 2024).

Agbebaku and Uwa (2022) conducted research about border security management through examination of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement in West Africa. The main finding of their research demonstrates that issues resulting from the Protocol failed to enhance regional safety standards throughout West Africa. The inadequate execution of this initiative by ECOWAS creates more security challenges compared to any enhancements in regional trade and development. Through time the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) has established various organizational reforms to protect the national borders measuring 4047 km which constantly improves the nation's safety and economic growth. The Nigeria Border Patrol Unit has received key operational enhancements to enhance workforce training and introduce modern surveillance equipment while creating a Border Patrol Corps to achieve maximum unit effectiveness. The Unit delivers its mission effectively enough that the statement about its effectiveness stands without exaggeration. (Nigeria Immigration Service, 2019).

Today, issues of border security and migration management are major social and political phenomena redefining economic and socio-political realities globally. The rising incidences of dangerous migration of young Africans, including many Nigerians, across the Sahara Desert and Mediterranean Sea corridor amidst

dehumanizing treatment on transit routes, demand genuine collaborative efforts among border officials across many countries (Nigeria Immigration Service, 2019).

Based on research from the African Development Bank (2016) it is shown that free movement and migration do not create more security threats than those posed by native citizens. The evidence from Rwanda along with Seychelles and Mauritius demonstrates this fact. After Rwanda implemented its new visa policy during 2014 only 0.045 percent of visitors could possibly pose security risks according to African Development Bank (2016). According to Opanike, Aduloju and Adenipekun in 2015 every part of the world faces challenges from transborder criminal activities. The benefits of free movement between countries exceed the actual or imagined security threats even though states express worry about the unfavorable effects of unchecked transboundary movement of people. The Northwest part of Nigeria maintains the largest network of transhumant pastoralist travel routes across West Africa and the Sahel region where numerous thousand Fulani migrant herdsmen annually move between prescribed migration paths (AFDB, 2015). Bandits have established operational strongholds within the forested regions which exist beyond Nigerian state governance so security forces find it very challenging to infiltrate this area (Ojewale, 2023). Arm-proliferation across West Africa caused by the Libyan state collapse in 2011 has allowed bandits to take possession of small arms and light weapons which threatens the safety of both rural areas and villages (Barnett & Rufai, 2021).

Bandits started conducting their attacks across multiple geographic regions of the world from the 19th century by raiding settlements before they retreated into their hideouts on horseback. The Northwest geo-political zone including Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, and Sokoto has experienced banditry that began from the unresolved conflicts between settled cultivators and nomadic herders which persists since almost four decades. The banditry operating within this area officially started its operations during 2009 before escalating heavily in 2011 following the national elections (Anka 2017; Agu & Ugada 2024).

The definition of a bandit includes someone who belongs to an outlawed gang using weapons to rob from people in secluded regions where law does not exist. Regional lawlessness enables criminal activities known as banditry that includes violent robbery acts (Agu & Ugada, 2024). Bands of armed robbers acted with organization to conduct international criminal activities in past times. The Asebenawa and Tuaregs together with the Fulani and Gobirawa carried out the majority of crimes in British and French territories (Rufa'i, 2021). The armed banditry problem in Northwest Nigeria goes beyond pastoralist insurgency because it contains diverse intricate causes together with multiple actors and expression forms and dimensions (Ojo et al., 2023). Omakoji, Igoli and Mbah (2024) defined banditry as an organized violent criminal operation which targets communities through raiding assaults killing and rapes and kidnapping or similar gruesome attacks on villages and markets and armed robbery. Thieves and attackers resort to intimidation through force or threat in order to carry out robberies and assaults as well as rapes and deaths (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014). Uche and Iwuamadi (2018) stated that banditry comprises armed groups assaulting vulnerable targets with weapons for attacking or defending their victims to achieve political objectives and stolen valuables.

Eric Hobsbawm demonstrated that banditry exists as a historical practice of pre-political societies which came into existence worldwide in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Fuoli, 2024). The researcher James (2023) documented how both cattle rustling and banditry escalated into major security concerns across Nigeria since the previous twenty years. Sources suggest that bandits along with brigands and militants tend to rise in territories which experience diminished levels of social justice and political stability and economic prosperity according to Cayli Messina (2021). Kitabu (2022) provides that citizen unemployment coupled with executive injustice combined with youth exploitation by politicians create banditry issues which are worsened by Nigerian borders' permeability and security agents' lack of motivation.

Chris et al. (2021) conducted historical and descriptive research that showed abject poverty, corruption, political influence, terrorism, lack of capital punishment, changing value system and quick-money syndrome as banditry origins.

According to Taylor (2016) illicit actors can establish operations within ungoverned spaces because weak failed or dissolved states perform no governing functions effectively. Banditry exists as a term which describes cases of armed robbery together with related violent offenses including kidnapping and both cattle rustling and

attacks on villages as well as markets. The practice of using force alongside threats ensures victims' intimidation while perpetrating violence against people or groups since economic or political motives fuel these actions (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014; Chris et al., 2021).

A group of unorganized criminals known as "bandits" conducts kidnap-for-profit along with armed robbery and cattle theft and sexual violence and assaults against transporters and agricultural workers in the North-West Nigerian territory. A written document from 1901 mentioned the earliest known bandit incident involving a massive trade caravan of 12,000 camels and its 210 dying traders (Rufa'i, 2018). From traditional farmer-herder disputes or small-scale rural disturbances to a full-fledged conflict that engulfed most of the Northwest, contemporary rural insecurity, also known as rural banditry, began in Zamfara about 2011 (Rufa'i, 2021).

Gap in Literature

Experts have refrained from thoroughly exploring the exact impact of weak border management on the entry of weapons and bandit movement between countries as well as security breakdowns in international cooperation. Current research fails to demonstrate a sufficient direct connection between inadequate border control systems and bandit operations along with their persistent nature in the northwestern region. Security outcomes at borders remain under-examined due to the lack of research about their relationship to regional policies and international collaboration along with local community border interactions.

METHODOLOGY

Using both qualitative and quantitative data, the study utilized tables, figures and content analysis to demonstrates how unregulated borders allow weapons and illegal goods to move freely with armed groups which leads to escalated violence and economic turmoil and threatened national security.

Theoretical Framework

Growing scholarly and policy attention has been paid to the Northwest region of Nigeria's ongoing instability, which is typified by banditry, livestock rustling, and kidnapping. Weak border management is one of the main causes of this vulnerability. The Failed State framework offers a convincing theoretical foundation for analyzing this issue. This theory describes how non-state entities like bandits flourish when a state is unable to maintain security and control over its territory. According to the failed state framework, a state is susceptible to instability when it is unable to maintain control over the lawful use of force inside its boundaries, deliver public services, or protect its territorial integrity (Rotberg, 2010). Bandits and armed organizations have found safe havens in Northwest Nigeria due to the open borders with neighboring countries like Niger and Chad. This problem is made worse by the area's enormous, unguarded forests, lax law enforcement, and corrupt border authorities (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019).

These flimsy boundaries are frequently used by bandit groups in the Zamfara, Katsina, and Sokoto States to smuggle weapons, cattle, and kidnapped individuals across international borders with little opposition. Furthermore, it is simpler for bandits to obtain shelter, resupply, and recruit due to the cross-border ethnic relationships between Nigerian towns and those of its neighbors (Amnesty International, 2020). According to the theory, one of the traditional indicators of a failing or weak state is reflected in the Nigerian state's incapacity to exercise effective control over its borders. There are connections between weak border governance and more general governance issues. Border communities are particularly vulnerable to bandit collaboration or victimization because they frequently experience marginalization, underdevelopment, and limited access to government services (Iyekekpolo, 2020). Although technological surveillance (such as drones), community-based policing, and combined border patrols have been suggested, their implementation has been uneven and underfunded.

In conclusion, the application of the Failed State paradigm shows that inadequate border management in Northwest Nigeria is a sign of more serious structural flaws in the Nigerian state rather than merely being a standalone administrative issue. Restoring state authority in the area and reducing banditry need regional cooperation, strengthening border governance, and funding the socioeconomic advancement of border villages.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In recent years, Nigeria has faced a number of security challenges, such as armed banditry, which is a serious threat to the north-west and the country as a whole (Ojo et al, 2023). Northwest Nigeria, one of the six geopolitical zones, is made up of seven states: Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Jigawa, Sokoto, and Zamfara. The Nigerian state is characterized as an imposed and peripheral form of capitalism (Abraham et al, 2024). For more than ten years, the Northwest has been plagued by tension and insecurity, becoming a hotspot for banditry, rape, kidnapping, armed robbery, cattle rustling, and destruction of property and lives (Abraham et al, 2024).

According to Ezeibe et al. (2022), mutual respect for the military's and international nongovernmental organizations' operational procedures is important for improving their relationship and developing long-term programs that prevent and counter violent extremism in Nigeria and elsewhere. Though initially unsuccessful, state and federal government responses involved police and military bombardments of bandit hideouts using various code names. Additionally, state administrations tried to negotiate and grant repentant bandits amnesty, which at first decreased violence but was ultimately unsuccessful. To stop banditry, Nigerian security forces used a variety of strategies (Chris et al, 2021). Police and military forces were sent by the federal government to the states of Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Niger, and Sokoto. Attacks persisted despite efforts to kill, apprehend, and destroy bandit hideouts. Attacks resumed in 2020 after armed bandits and the governors of Katsina, Sokoto, and Zamfara reached a peace agreement in 2019 that temporarily decreased the number of fatalities (Chris et al, 2021).

Criminals can commit crimes in Nigeria and then escape back to Niger since there are hardly any restrictions on travel across the border between Nigeria and the Niger Republic (Okorie et al., 2023). The majority of the Nigeria-Niger border is unmarked, especially in the areas surrounding Jibia in Katsina, Illela in Sokoto, and Ruwawuri and Kamba in Kebbi. The border is only ostensibly present in places like Katsina's Daura, Kongolom, Jibia, and Magama. Residents of Kongolom, for example, cite roughly 13 unidentified entry locations, most of which are through farmlands (Okorie et al., 2023).

The worst humanitarian crisis in decades is being caused by banditry, which poses the biggest security risk to rural populations in border regions in northwest Nigeria and southwest Niger (Ojewale, 2024). Multifaceted poverty, various conflict profiles, perceived injustice, border porosity, arms trafficking, and location are the main causes and facilitators of banditry (Ojewale, 2025). Banditry is sustained by the importation of weapons and criminal elements into Nigeria due to the porous borders around the northwest zone (Nsiegbe & Gabriel, 2024). The worrying increase in banditry in recent years has been largely caused by inadequate border security (Adesola & Akerele, 2025).

Similarly, it was discovered that poverty, permeable borders, political interests, and youth unemployment are the main causes of armed banditry (John et al, 2023). Bandits involved in cattle rustling, kidnapping, and murder can enter Nigeria freely due to its porous borders (Onota et al, 2024). The struggle for political power, unemployment, poverty, excessive militarization, injustice by traditional rulers, drug abuse, vulnerability, dispersed settlements, financial incentives, firearm proliferation, and inadequate border security are some of the factors that contribute to the proliferation of arms and banditry in the northwest (Agu & Ugada, 2024).

Nigeria borders the Gulf of Guinea to the south, the Benin Republic to the west, Niger to the north, and Cameroon and Chad to the east (Usman & Singh, 2021). The security problem has been made worse by the use of force, which has mostly scattered bandits into previously untouched areas in spite of military attempts (John et al, 2023). In Nigeria, banditry still has a significant detrimental impact on human security.

The battle is complicated by a number of parties, including as politicians, security services, gold miners, and traditional rulers (Rufa'i, 2021). The main cause of the present banditry surge is the governance institutions' continued disregard for rural areas since democracy was restored in 1999. Due to this neglect, rural communities have been abandoned, forestlands have been poorly managed, and traditional policing and conflict resolution methods have become weaker, creating governance gaps (Osasona, 2023b).

The Nigerian government has called for international help after admitting that its security forces lack enough contemporary equipment. It highlights the necessity of taking preventative action and working with impacted communities (Chris et al, 2021). Between 2011 and 2021, around 10,000 armed bandits preyed on Zamfara state, killing over 12,000 people, stealing about 250,000 livestock, destroying 120 communities, and uprooting about 50,000 people, many of whom fled to the neighboring Niger Republic (Rufa'i, 2021).

Table 1: Major Bandit leaders in the Northwest and their Areas of Operations

S/N	Armed Groups	Location	Crime
1	Abubakar Abdallah (alias Dogo Gide)	Abubakar Abdallah (alias Dogo Gide)	Kidnapping, Cattle Rustling Armed Robbery Gender-Based and Sexual Violence (GBSV). Has contact and connections with ISWAP and Boko Haram and was responsible for the kidnapping of 102 staff and students of Federal Govt. Girls College, Yauri on 18 th Jun, 2021. The students are still in his custody.
2	Yellow Jan-Bros	Birnin Gwari Forest and Giwa Areas of Kaduna State.	Kidnapping, Cattle rustling, (GBSV) and village raiding. He was responsible for the kidnapping of 136 Islamiyya Students in Tagina village, Rafi LGA, Niger State on 30th May, 2021. The students were freed on August, 25, 2021.
3	TsohoManjagara	Giwa Local Government, Kaduna State.	Kidnapping, Cattle rustling, Gender Based and Sexual Violence including assault, rape, forced prostitution, gang rape was killed in an encounter with the Nigeria Army, 18th June, 2021 in Yauri LGA, Kebbi State.
4	Alhaji Bodere and Ahaji Beleri	Sabon Birni, Giwa LGA, Kaduna State	Kidnapping, (GBSV) armed robbery and forced labour and willful destruction of crops.
5	Yellow Ashana	Sabon Garin Gyadam, Kaduna State.	Kidnapping and (GBSV).
6	Ali Kawaje also called Ali Kachalla	Birnin Gwari, Kaduna State and Kagara LGA, Niger State	Forced displacement of communities or grazing reserves, mass killing , Kidnapping and GBSV. He is associated to the Shekau faction of Boko Haram.
7	Alhaji Isiya, Buhari General and Gannaie	Kaduna-Abuja Highway, Kaduna State.	Killing, kidnapping, rape, Forced marriage and GBSV and forceful collection of farming and grazing levies from the communities.
8	Alhaji Isiya, Buhari General and Gannaie	Kaduna-Abuja Highway, Kaduna State.	killing, kidnapping, rape, Forced marriage and GBSV and forceful collection of farming and grazing levies from the communities.
9	Alhaji Ado Aleru	Yan-Kuzo in Chafe LGA as well as some parts of Kastinaand Zamfara states	killing, Kidnapping, GBSV, forced labour, negotiation with state officials in the payment of ransom as well as 'buying' of kidnapped persons from other kidnappers. Kastina State Government declared him wanted and fixed a price of N5 million for whoever knows his location, but surprised he is still found in Yan-Kuzo village attending different functions and ceremonies.
10	Lanke, Umar Bengo, Yahaya, Kabir,	Dan Rumfa village in Jibya LGA	Kidnapping, killing, arm smuggling and armed robbery.
11	Auwalun Daudawa	Safana, Dan-Musa and Batsari LGAs, Katsina State.	Cattle rustling, rape, kidnapping, attacks on villages and vigilante members. He was later killed by his fellow bandits in March, 2021 in Zamfara State.
12	Dangotte Bazamfare	Along Katsina and Zamfara borders.	Killing of innocent citizens, kidnapping, GBSV, attack on villages, police and military outpost as well as child labour

13	Alhaji Auta, Ardo Na Shaware, Ardo Nashama and Alhaji Shingi.	Birnin Magaji LGA, Zamfara State	Cattle rustling , forced labour, attack on rival bandits camps
14	Dankarami	Zurmi LGA, Zamfara State	Attack on police and military outpost s, kidnapping, rape, forced labour and armed robbery. He is widely known for his anti-security agencies sentiment.
15	Alhaji Shehu Rekep and Alhaji Halilu	Tsafe, Maru and Anka LGAs, Zamfara State	Kidnapping, GBSV, supply of arms and ammunitions to the armed groups responsible for the recruitment and training of foot soldiers to other groups.
16	Manu D. O	Birnin Gwari and Giwa Areas, Kaduna state.	Cattle Rustling and Kidnapping.
17	Saleh piya-piya	Anchau, Kaduna State	Armed robbery, Kidnapping and cattle rustling.
18	Bello Turji	Shinkafi/Isa & Sabon Birnin	Kidnapping, cattle rustling Force Labour & Gender and sexual base violence.

Source: Rufa'i (2021)

Usman & Singh (2021) claim that armed bandit groups in Nigeria use the large uncontrolled geographic areas to plan attacks, conduct operations, and hide, thereby promoting insecurity, especially in the Northern states of Nigeria. These groups import weapons from neighboring countries that are afflicted by conflict. Nigeria's worst national humanitarian catastrophe in decades is being caused by banditry, which is the country's worst security danger in terms of its disruptive impact and level of bloodshed (Osasona, 2023a).

As of June 30, 2020, the northwest banditry situation had displaced over 309,000 people, according to UNHCR. There are roughly 69,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in Zamfara state, 71,000 in Kaduna, 61,000 in Katsina, 45,000 in Sokoto, and 3,000 in Niger. Furthermore, around 30,000 individuals arrived in Maradi, Republic of Niger, between May and June 2020 alone, out of the approximately 60,000 displaced persons that crossed the border from Sokoto, Katsina, and Zamfara (Agu & Ugada, 2024).

Every day, villagers are abducted, killed, and set on fire; many of these destructive acts take place outside of areas that are under police and security control (Ceccato & Ceccato, 2017). Between 2011 and 2018, bandit attacks destroyed more than 500 villages and communities, destroyed 13,000 hectares of land, killed 2,835 individuals, and internally displaced more than 200,000 people (Abraham et al, 2024). Approximately 77,000 Nigerians have sought safety in neighboring countries since 2011, while nearly 200,000 people have fled bandit violence and are still displaced in the northwest. As they try to handle crises in Nigeria as well as those in the nearby Sahel and Lake Chad regions, humanitarian operations are overburdened (Chris et al, 2021). According to Mbah et al. (2021), the humanitarian crisis has gotten worse as a result of the displacements since more people are in urgent need of non-food goods, water, sanitation, hygiene, food, security, health, education, livelihood, shelter, and protection.

Table 2: Showing the impact of Banditry in North-West Zone of Nigeria from 2019-2020

S/N	Categories	Total Number of affected people
1	People Displaced	485,000
2	Fatalities Reported	2,454
3	People in Need	3,679,000

Source: ACAPS, 2020 extracted and compiled by Usman & Singh (2021)

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 reported 210,354 people displaced from 171 towns and villages in the North West, citing local government authorities' estimates. According to Agu & Ugada (2024), at least 8,000 people were killed between 2011 and 2019, mostly in Zamfara state, with the majority of the casualties occurring over the last five years. Hundreds of thousands of people are still missing or unaccounted for. The crisis has also created a humanitarian issue. About 60,000 of the displaced have also crossed the border to the Niger Republic, while 19,000 Nigeriens have been internally displaced due to the same border insecurity (Agu & Ugada, 2024). As stated by Lenshie et al (2021) human security is jeopardized, livelihoods are endangered, and population relocation is exacerbated by these conflicts.

Figure 1: Number of Fatalities as Result of Banditry from 2018-2020
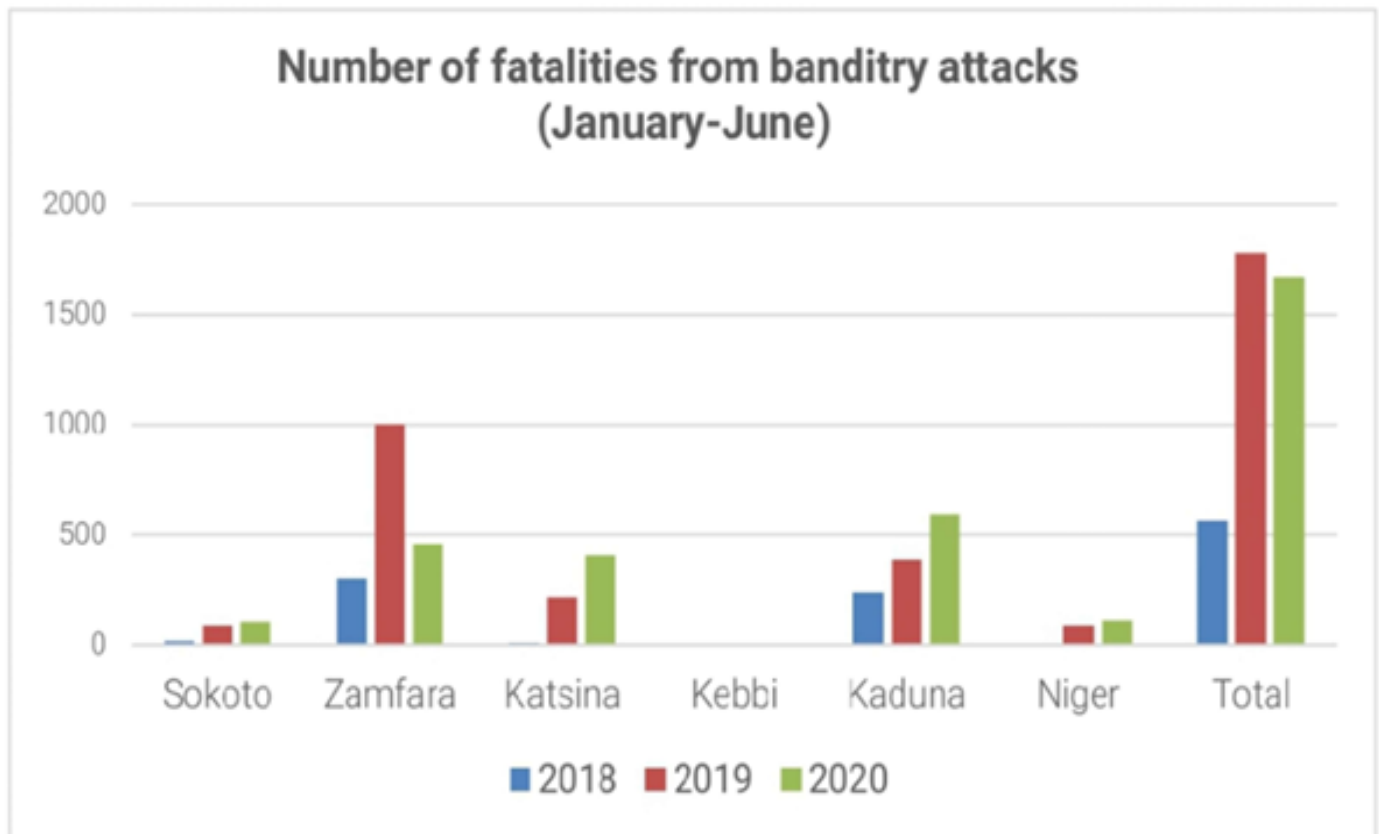
Source: ACAPS Report, 2020; Usman & Singh (2021)

Three opposing ideas have surfaced regarding the nature and origin of banditry in Nigeria. In certain of Nigeria's unstable geopolitical zones, the most prevalent literary narrative links banditry to unmanaged farmer-pastoralist disputes (Kuna & Ibrahim, 2017). According to the second viewpoint, banditry is a new kind of terrorism that is a continuation of the Fulani Jihad, which killed farming villages in northern Nigeria in the 20th century (Global Terrorism Index, 2016). The third, and most contentious, viewpoint, on the other hand, sees banditry as state-approved violence intended to depopulate villages and Islamize the larger northern Nigeria, especially areas that are not Hausa or Fulani dominant. The public's dissatisfaction with the government's response to the violence committed by pastoralists in northern Nigeria is the central theme of this third perspective (ACAPS, 2020).

Regardless of origin and aim hypotheses, the emergence of banditry corresponds with Nigeria's return to democratic administration in 1999. Political thugs, gangs, cults, and ethnic militants are just a few of the violent non-state actors that have dominated Nigeria's national and subnational security agendas during the last 20 years of the post-military government era (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2019). These organizations have benefited from the relative freedom that democratic administration offers, especially the removal of laws and limitations from the military era that restrict civic space.

Figure 2: Incidences of bandit attacks in Northwest Nigeria, 2013-2022.
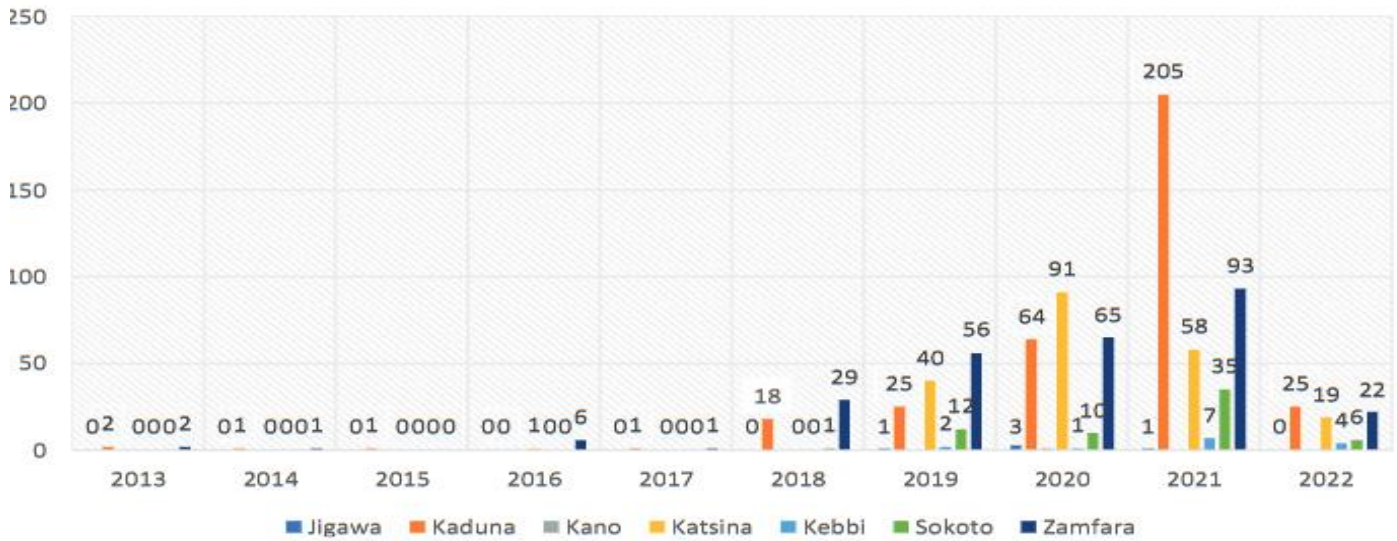
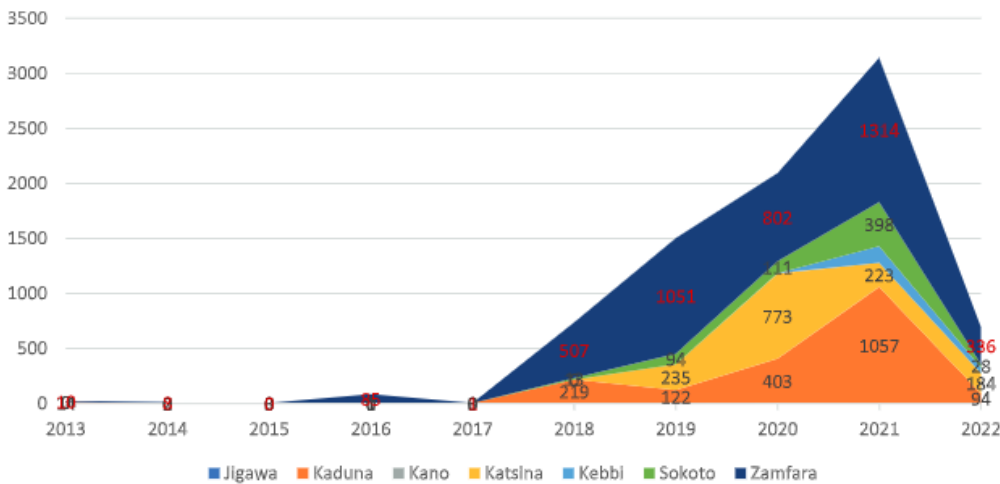Source: Ojo., Oyewole & Aina (2023)

Ojo et al (2023) examine the patterns of armed banditry incidents in the northwest of Nigeria from January 2013 to March 2022. It displays the pattern of documented armed bandit attacks in northwest Nigeria. Jigawa had five bandit attacks out of 909 total, while Kaduna had 342, Kano had 1, Katsina had 208, Kebbi had 14, Sokoto had 54, and Zamfara had 275. According to the data, the majority of armed bandit attacks occurred in Kaduna, with Katsina, Zamfara, and Sokoto states following closely behind. There were few instances of armed banditry in Jigawa State and Kano.

Figure 3. The conflict catalyst cycle
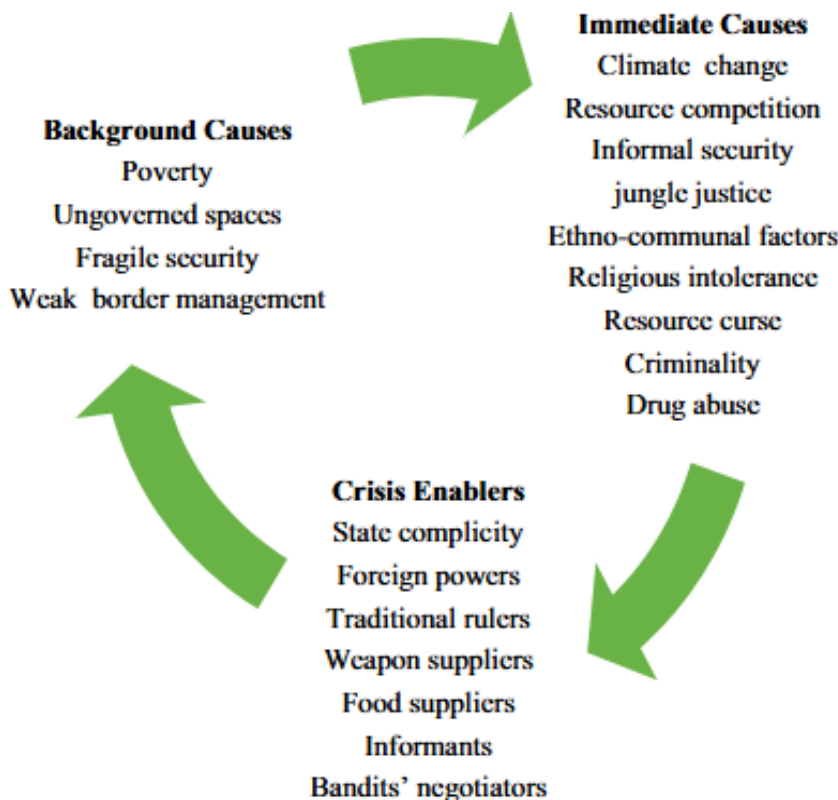
Source: Ojo., Oyewole & Aina (2023)

Figure 4: Total fatalities from armed bandit conflicts in Northwest Nigeria, 2013-2022.

Source: Ojo., Oyewole & Aina (2023)

Armed bandits killed 8,300 individuals between January 2013 and March 2022, including seven in Jigawa, 1,917 in Kaduna, 1,416 in Katsina, 202 in Kebbi, 644 in Sokoto, and 4,114 in Zamfara, as shown in Figure 5. According to some other sources, the crisis in Zamfara alone resulted in almost 3,600 kidnappings, 8,000 fatalities, and 200,000 displaced people. Furthermore, in 2021, there were more than 1,000 kidnappings or ransoms in the area (Ojo et al, 2023)

Table 3: Reported Incidences of Major Bandits Attacks in North West Nigeria, 2018-2022

S/N	Place/ LGA of attacks	State	Dates	Casualties	Daily
1	Bawan Daji village of Anka LGA	Zamfara	Mar 31, 2018	30 people killed	The Punch
2	Kawaye village in the Bagega community of Anka LGA	Zamfara	Mar 1, 2019	21 people killed 40, Others kidnapped	The Nation
3	Klahu, Tsage and Geeri Communities in Rabah LGA	okoto	June 9, 2019	25 people killed	The Punch
4	Kankara and Danmusa LGA	Katsina	July 4, 2019	11 people killed	The Punch
5	Tsayu village of Jibiya LGA	Katsina	Aug 19, 2019	Four persons killed	The Nation
6	Babban Rafi village in Gummi LGA & Makosa village of Zurmi LGA	Zamfara	Jan 17, 2020	31 persons killed	The Punch
7	villages in Igabi and Giwa LGA	Kaduna	March 2, 2020	50 people killed Many injured	Tribune
8	Kankara, Danmusa, Dutsinma, Masawa & Safana LGAs	Katsina	April 18, 2020	40 persons were killed, several others injured	The Punch
9	Kurechin Atai, Kurecin Giye, Kurechin Duste, Makauwachi and Daule Villages	Kastina	April 20, 2020	47 people killed in all the attacks	The Punch
10	Akwunakwo, Kabirasha and Damba villages in Chikun LGA	Kaduna	April 24, 2020	7 persons killed, 1 person Abducted	The Nation
11	Villages in Danmusa, Dutsinma & Safana LGAs	Katsina	May 2, 2020	36 people killed, 3 abducted, several others injured & property worth millions of naira destroyed	The Punch
12	Faskari and Sabuwa LGA	Kastina	May 6, 2020	5 persons killed, 1 abducted & a DPO shot	Tribune

| 13	3 villages in Tsafe LGA	Zamfara	May 20, 2020	12 people killed & several cattle rustled	The Punch
14	Maru & Talata-Mafara LGA	Zamfara	June 5, 2020	12 persons killed	The Punch
15	3 villages of Jema'a &Kaura LGA	Kaduna	July, 26, 2020	10 people killed	The Nation
16	Zamfarawa community in Batsari LGA	Kastina	Aug. 9, 2020	2 persons & 8 Bandits killed	The Punch
17	Udawa farming village	Kaduna	Sept. 13, 2020	16 persons were Kidnapped	Vanguard
18	Police Station in Tangaza LGA	Sokoto	Sept. 18, 2020	DPO, 1 Inspector Were killed & 2 Women kidnapped	Vanguard
19	Kaduna-Abuja highway & Gidan Zaki, Zangon Kataf LGA	Kaduna	Nov.17, 2020	8 ABU students abducted, District Head & son killed	Vanguard
20	Kanoma District, Maru LGA	Zamfara	Nov.23, 2020	1Imam,17worshipers abducted	Vanguard
21	Tashar Bama, Dogun Muaze & Unguwar Maigayya communities in Sabuwa LGA	Kastina	Dec. 1, 2020	8 people killed, 30 others kidnapped	Vanguard
22	Kasuwan Magani town in Kajuru LGA	Kaduna	Dec. 5, 2020	1 person lost his life	Vanguard
23	Government Science Sec. Sch (GSSS) in Kankara LGA	Katsina	Dec.11, 2020	about 344 students were kidnapped	Guardian
24	Villages in Idasu, Giwa LGA	Kaduna	Feb. 24, 2021	18 persons killed	Premium Times
25	3 villages in Danmusa LGA	Katsina	Feb. 25, 2021	20 people killed Several others injured	Premium Ties
26	Govt. Girl Sec. School Jangebe, Talata Mafara LGA	Zamfara	Feb. 26, 2021	317 students were Abducted	Guardian
27	Federal College of Forestry Mech. Afaka, Igabi LGA	Kaduna	Mar 11, 2021	39 students were Kidnapped	Daily Trust
28	Green□eld University, Kasarami village in Chukun LGA	Kaduna	April 20, 2021	20 students & 2 staff were abducted	Vanguard
29	Koro, Zutu, Kimpi, Gaya Dimi, Ra□n Gora & Iguenge villages in Danko/Wasagu LGAs	bi	June 3, 2021	88 people killed	Vanguard
30	5 villages of Zurmi LGA	Zamfara	June 11, 2021	50 people were killed, and over 1000 persons were Displaced	Blueprint
31	Fed. Govt. College, Birni Yauri	Kebbi	June 14, 2021	1 policeman killed, 80 students abducted	Guardian
32	Bethel Baptist High School, Damishi village in Chikun LGA	Kaduna	July 5, 2021	121 students were kidnapped	Vanguard
33	Goran Namaye village of Maradun LGA	Zamfara	Aug. 23, 2021	4 persons killed, 50 others kidnapped	This-Day
34	Sabon Garin Tsaskiya village in Safana LGA	sina	Nov, 12, 2021	11 villagers abducted several others injured	Vanguard
35	Gidan Duka village, Kankara LGA	Katsina	Nov, 14, 2021	Several domestic animals rustled	Premium Times
36	Geba, Gidan Kaura, Kura, Bayauri, Gana & Duma Villages, Gusau LGA	Zamfara	Dec. 27, 2021	33 people abducted Hundreds of villagers were displaced	Vanguard
37	Ra□n Danya, Barayar Zaki, Ra□n Gero & Kurfa Villages in Anka and Bukkuyum LGAs	Zamfara	Jan 9, 2022	Over 140 people killed, about 2000 cattle were rustled	This-Day

38	Dankade town in Danko, Wasagu LGA	Kebbi	Jan 14, 2022	17 people killed Several others were Abducted	Premium Times
39	Guya village & Galadima Community, Bakori LGA	Katsina	Feb 8, 2022	8 persons killed, 4 injured, village Head & 3 others kidnapped	Guardian
40	Kaduna bound train	Kaduna	March 28, 2022	8 persons killed, 168 others kidnapped	Vanguard
41	Damri, Kalahe & Sabon Garin villages of Bakura district	Zamfara	May 8, 2022	48 people killed	Vanguard
42	Dogon Noma, Ungwan Sarki & Ungwan Maikori villages of Kajuru LGA	Kaduna	June 10, 2022	32 persons murdered	The Nation
43	Kango & Dangulbi communities in Maru LGA	Zamfara	July 10, 2022	18 people were killed & several others displayed	Premium Times
44	Mosque in Ruwan Jema town, Bukkuyum LGA	Zamfara	Sep. 24, 2022	15 persons killed	Reuters
45	Shantalawa village in Dutsin-Ma LGA	Katsina	Oct. 16, 2022	15 people lost their lives, 6 injured & 191 others displayed	Daily Trust

Source: Compiled Abraham et al (2024) from Nigerian Dailies (2022)

Based on the aforementioned facts, it may be inferred that more than 1,100 individuals were killed in various bandit assaults in the North West between 2011 and 2018. Similarly, around 4180 persons were murdered by bandits in five North West states—Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara—between March 1, 2019, and February 8, 2022. Similarly, more than 3,560 livestock were rustled throughout North West states between 2011 and December 27, 2021, and over 448 thousand individuals were internally displaced. Once more, the North West region's highest rates of bandit attacks were reported in Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina, and Kaduna (Abraham et al, 2024).

In addition to destroying vast infrastructure and private property, these wars have forced many individuals to flee their homes or lose their means of support, forcing them to turn to criminal violence or armed resistance as a means of survival (Ojo et al., 2023). As stated by Ojo et al (2024) banditry have severe implications for intergenerational human capacity development, as armed banditry has reduced school enrollment and increased out-of-school children in the northwest.

Figure 2: Out of School Children by geopolitical zones in Nigeria.
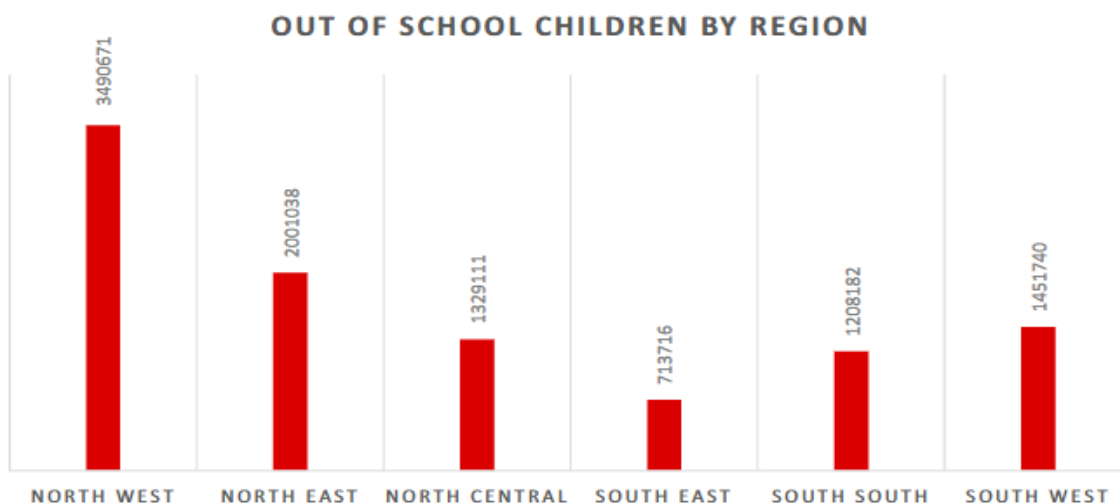
Source: Adopted by Ojo, Oyewole and Aina from Premium Times (2021)

As evident in Figure 2, the north-west has 3.49 million out-of-school children, the highest in the country. These children can become a set of recruits into the criminal and resistant groups, thus recycling membership and fighters, which will ensure the crisis is protracted and insecurity endures (Ojo et al, 2024)

The Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria's northeast continues to be the country's most serious security issue, despite a number of other dangers (Ezeani et al, 2021). While in the northwest, the country and her ciutizens continues to suffer from the acts of banditry. Kugbayi & Adegbami (2023) claim that Nigeria's incapacity to effectively administer some areas has left a void that has allowed banditry to flourish. Kugbayi & Adegbami (2023) mourn that, the unchecked banditry in some parts of the nation paints a picture of ungoverned areas, indicating that there are areas where governmental order is slacking.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The enduring problem of banditry throughout the Northwest of Nigeria directly relates to useless border enforcement practices. Because borders are poorly guarded criminals have claimed sanctuaries to continue illegal activities while they transport weapons alongside contraband and criminal elements who advance into other countries against security operations. The state's border regulatory capacity weakened due primarily to deficient infrastructure systems together with institutional corruption at border control points as well as the absence of cooperation among security agencies and inadequate community engagement activities. The government's inability to properly maintain its borders has produced a combination of three key negative effects: an upward trend of violent crimes and rural economic disruption and local population displacement as well as decreased public confidence in security capabilities. All solutions to stop or eliminate banditry will lead to brief temporary success because the core problems stemming from bad border management remain unaddressed.

The study maintains that banditry control efforts will fail to bear substantial results unless government institutions conduct far-reaching reforms which include better monitoring techniques and strengthened guardian networks linking authorities across states along with strong coordination between different agencies and skilled development of public institutions for role fulfillment. The document supports border security through three-step solutions that merge technological progress with regional defense alliances and community-centered development to tackle border insecurity bases.

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