



Banditry And Its Effects on The Nigerian State

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ABSTRACT

Banditry has become widespread and has also denied the hallowed image of the Nigerian state and that of its citizens. This research investigates the surging activities of banditry and its effects on the environment. The paper starts by looking at the introduction, it moves to clarifying the concept of banditry. It adopts the routine activity theory to explain the rationale behind the activities of banditry. It also looks at the effects of banditry on Nigeria. It concludes that the effects of banditry in Nigeria has been devastating owing to its destructive effects.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country under distress and the distress are more evident in the spat of violence and criminality that has plagued her constituent parts. One of these forms of criminalities is banditry. Banditry is the occurrence or prevalence of armed robbery or violent crime (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014). Overtime banditry has been an organized cross-border crime (Rufa'i, 2021). In Nigeria, criminal gangs are engaged in banditry by stealing livestock leading to the displacement of rural dwellers. Such theft of livestock forces the rural inhabitants to migrate southward causing environmental degradation, population growth, hike in the price of livestock, instability, exacerbates pastoralists-crop producers, class etc.

The banditry phenomenon in Nigeria seems to be connected to the inadequacies of the government security forces, identity and inter-group relations and the worsening socio-economic conditions of the masses (Gadzama, Saddiq, Ochuehi & Dariya, 2018). The prevalence of banditry in Nigeria seems to be high and rising over the years (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014). The rising incidence of banditry is connected to the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) that have found their ways into the hands of individuals which forms part of the challenges of human security affecting Nigeria (Gadzama, et al, 2018). There are 7-8 million illicit SALW entering into Nigeria (Chuma-

Okoro, 2014). Banditry has become a matter of internal security concern in Nigeria (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016).

2.0 THE CONCEPT OF BANDITRY

Banditry refers to the form of armed violence driven principally by the criminal intent to steal and plunder which is motivated by the economic accumulation (Dami, 2021). The problem of banditry borders on the existing crises between people who competes over common economic interests and this problem is linked to the pastoralists-crop producers' conflict (Oyinloye, 2020).

Banditry remains a major security challenge that has created instability, debilitated governance and exposed the environment to numerous threats thereby hindering socio-economic development (Ibrahim & Mutawalli, 2020). Banditry has been observed to be carried out in public places but with higher concentration in urban areas (Shalangwa, 2013). Banditry severely affects the price of cash crops such as the transportation of such crops to the market is often interrupted which makes the farmer abandon commercial harvests (Muggah & Batchelor, 2002).

Oyinloye (2020) listed the five types of banditry as follows:

- i. Rural banditry.
- ii. Resources-induced banditry.
- iii. Ethno-religious-induced banditry.
- iv. Political-induced banditry.
- v. Nomadic free-range grazing-induced banditry.

This unfortunate act is in earnest and has hampered economic activities that indirectly left the environment captivated, farmlands left barren, infrastructures devastated, forest razed and fear of being innate to the inhabitants (Ibrahim & Mutawalli, 2020). The modus operandi of bandits could constitute an obstacle to the preventive measures that could be put in place by the law enforcement agents (Shalangwa, 2013).

The effects of banditry could translate to material losses and physical injury or death, social intimidation, restriction on freedom of movement and even psychological fear of political intimidation (Odekunle, 1986). Banditry though its incessant incidence has some negative implications which includes but not limited to undermining societal and communal cohesion, aggravates the breakdown of laws and orders among others (Shalangwa, 2013). Perpetrators of banditry storms settlements to maim people (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016).

3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The paper adopts the Routine Activity Theory as its tool of analysis. The major exponent of the Theory are Cohen & Felson (1979) in their explanation of crime rate changes in the United State between 1947 and 1974. The theory has its foundation in human ecology and rational choice theory (Felson & Cohen, 1980).

The theory is based on the following assumptions:

- i. Crime is likely to occur when there are spatial-temporal convergence of essential converge of three elements of crime which are as follows: a motivated offender, an attractive target and the absence of a capable guardianship.
- ii. Factors that renders a particular targets attractive situational and crime-specific.
- iii. Crimes can be perpetrated by anyone who has the opportunity in terms of capability and availability of vulnerable targets.

- iv. Victims have choices on whether to be victims mainly by possibly avoiding situations where a crime can be committed against them.

In practical term, it has been observed that banditry is a crime that has been aided by the lawlessness and abject poverty in Nigeria coupled with the high level of vulnerability. This is the exact situation in Nigeria especially in the northern part where the activities of banditry is at the increase.

The theory has been criticized on the assumption that it holds that criminals are rational in their decision making so that they many not use the same rationale as the person, people or institute ions implementing the security measures (International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioural Sciences, 2015).

4.0 THE EFFECTS OF BANDITRY IN NIGERIA

The pervasive banditry in Nigeria has become a subject of national security and public concern due to the multi-faceted layers of the animosity involved and its recurrent nature and its consequences on the environment calls for effective mechanism to mitigate the threats it poses to the peace and livelihood of the society (Ibrahim & Mutawalli, 2020).

The four patterns of banditry are:

- i. Armed robbery.
- ii. Kidnapping.
- iii. Cattle rustling.
- iv. Village raids (Dami, 2021).

The nature of banditry in Nigeria becomes so common that only a few could travel or live within border communities that claims not to suffer its impacts (Shalangwa, 2013). Human-induced disasters like banditry had significant impacts on the environment like most natural disasters do (Ibrahim & Mutawalli, 2020).

Bandits raid pastoralists, crops producers, travelers, business tycoons etc. and take huge tolls on in terms of lives and disrupted economic activities by attacking the network of highways that linked Nigeria (Shalangwa, 2013). People can no longer go to farms due to the fear of being attacked (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Activities, 1999). Banditry in Nigeria has developed new tendencies from the traditional to the modern (Shalangwa, 2013). Bad leadership, endemic poverty, weak correctional agencies, lack of synergy among security agencies among others are the factors responsible for banditry and other organized crimes in Nigeria (Dami, 2021).

The terror generated by banditry in Nigeria has induced displacement, delay and even frustrate resettlement in Nigeria. Banditry has become rampant and has denied the hallowed image of the Nigerian state and its citizens (Dami, 2021). In fact, banditry has become a harsh reality in today's Nigerian society (Adegoke, 2009). The level of banditry in Nigeria escalated between 2014 and 2019 (Dami, 2021). Banditry in Nigeria seems to defy all peaceful means directed at resolving it thereby casting the country in bad light that her security architecture is ineffective (Oyinloye, 2020). Banditry has caused forced displacement which has in turn destroyed families, disrupted economic activities and undermine social development; in fact, the different mode of operations of the bandits in Nigeria has to a large extent turbinated to insecurity, violence and break down of laws and orders in Nigeria (Shalangwa, 2013).

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The paper explores the effects of banditry on the Nigerian state. It observed that banditry has led to the loss of lives and properties. The paper reveals that certain factors are responsible for the banditry activities in Nigeria and the effects of banditry on Nigeria has been very destructive. The paper recommends that community policing should be encouraged in areas where the surge of banditry is high as a way of combatting the menace it poses to the security and stability of the said area. This is because if it is not urgently combatted, it has tendencies to pose great dangers to the West African Sub-Region in few years to come.

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