

Armed Banditry and Internal Security in Zamfara State

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Abstract - Armed banditry poses a serious threat not only to the Internal Security of Zamfara State, but to the National Security of Nigeria at large, in view of its impacts and implications. The level at which armed bandits were operating within Zamfara State needs to be given its rightful attention by both the Federal and the State governments. It has led to general and complex social violence and insecurity in the State for almost a decade. There occurs, destruction of lives and properties, displacement of people from their communities; and a growing numbers of widows; widowers and orphan children, mostly in camps where IDPs reside following armed bandits' continued attacks on both farming and pastoral communities across different areas of the state. It was based on this background that, this study was carried out in order to assess the impact of armed banditry on the Internal Security of Zamfara State. The study adopts the Queer Ladder Theory (QLT) as its analytical framework. Moreover, the study has revealed the factors responsible for armed banditry in the state, viz; Unemployment, Poverty, Injustice by traditional fathers, Drug abuse, Vulnerability, Disperse settlement, Huge financial benefits, Proliferation of fire arms, Poor nature of security at the border, Cultural conflict and Out of Court/Police settlement. The study recommends, among other things, adoption of Conflict Resolution Mechanism and Amnesty as well as Socio-economic policies that would lead to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the affected communities.

Index Terms — Armed banditry, Internal Security, Modus operandi, Queer ladder theory

1 INTRODUCTION

Since the return of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, the security system of the country was challenged by the rise of insurgency in different parts of the country, so much so that, there was the emergence of various militant groups in the Niger Delta region and Boko Haram in the North East. Very recent also, there is the emergence of armed banditry with its attendant crimes (kidnapping, culpable homicide and cattle rustling) in the North West region, an area which used to be the most peaceful part of the nation. It is no doubt that, all these have retarded the general socio-economic development and democratic consolidation of our dear nation. This research work is an attempt to look at the current security situation in Zamfara state with a view to proffer a way forward for achieving permanent peace in the state and the region at large.

Zamfara State is among the seven states that formed the Northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It was created in 1996 out of the then Sokoto State. It shares an international border with the Republic of Niger to the North, and interstate boundaries with Katsina to the East, Sokoto State to the West, Kebbi, Niger and Kaduna States to the South. Zamfara State Comprises fourteen local government areas namely; Gusau, Tsafe, Bungudu, Maru, Kaura-Namoda, Zurmi, Shinkafi, Birnin-Magaji, Talata-Mafara, Bakura, Maradun, Anka, Bukkuyum, and Gummi. The State has a land mass of thirty nine thousand seven hundred sixty two square kilometres (39,762km²). It has a population of three million two hundred and seventy eight thousand, eight hundred and seventy three people 3,278,873 (2006 Census Figures) and predominantly agrarian. Hausas are the dominant tribe while the Fulanis formed between twenty to thirty percent total population out of which about fifteen to twenty percent are pastoral in nature. Zamfara State is endowed with vast forest composed of thirty thick grazing reserves. The grazing reserves covers about two

million two hundred and twenty five thousand, six hundred and fourty eight hectares (2,225,648 hectares). This provide the habitable environment for pastoral life. The State has an estimated total livestock of about Six million comprising Cattle, Sheep, Goats, Camels, Horses and Donkeys [1].

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Queer Ladder Theory (QLT) as its analytical framework. The theory was influenced by an American sociologist, Daniel Bell (1919-2011), who coined the idea of 'queer ladder' in an attempt to explain the instrumental essence of organized crime as a desperate means of socio-economic empowerment and social climbing. This theoretical perspective has since fertilized into a popular theoretical framework widely used in contemporary crime studies. The basic assumptions of QLT are;

1. Organized crime is an instrumental behaviour; it is means to an end.
2. It is an instrument of social climbing and/or socio-economic advancement.
3. It is a measure to accumulate wealth and build power "[2], [3]".

Often ascribed to Queer Ladder Theory is the notion that organized crime thrive in contexts where the government's capacity to dictate, sanction and deter crime is poor; where public corruption is endemic; and where prospects for legitimate livelihood opportunities are slim "[4],[5]'[3]". Under these circumstances, the incentive to indulge in crime is high, while deterrence from criminal living is low. In other words, the benefits of committing a crime surpass the costs and/or risks. This creates pretext for criminal impunity and franchise [3].

Applied to the purpose of this study, QLT would enable one to come to terms with the prevalence of organized crime in Zamfara State. In this regard, it is to be observed that the phenomenon of armed banditry in Zamfara State has been driven by criminal quest for economic accumulation in an environment that more or less condones crimes. This has been

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worsened by the prevailing socio-economic discontent and attendant livelihood crisis in the state, plus the seeming indolence of relevant government agencies towards arresting the ugly situation. A necessary consequence of this trend is prevalence of crime and criminal impunity [3].

The concept of ‘Ladder’ in QLT signifies untoward pattern of social mobility. Hence, those who take to organized crime, such as armed banditry, do so as a desperate means of economic accumulation and socio-economic empowerment. The adoption of the theory for the purpose of this study is informed by its analytical utility in providing insights in to the sociological foundations of organized crime, prominent among which is armed banditry in Zamfara State.

Research Methodology

The Approach of this Study is Qualitative and Descriptive. Data were generated through a Secondary source extracted from Library and official sources, including Books, Journals, Magazines, Unpublished works, Dailies, Periodicals, and On-line Materials.

HISTORICAL OVER-VIEW OF ARMED BANDITRY IN ZAMFARA STATE

The genesis of armed banditry in Zamfara State started since around 2009, but it became out of control in 2011 after the general elections [6]. During that period, there were frequent theft of domestic animals by local bandits across many local government areas of the state. The bandits used to carry Dane guns, cutlasses and sticks for their operations and most of their activities were targeted on cattle owners/rearers found in isolated villages and forests. This unpleasant act triggered the affected communities that are predominantly in disperse rural settlements to organise a local vigilante group known as “YANSAKAI” in order to counter or checkmate the activities of the bandits.

The first operation of this ‘Yansakai vigilante group took place on the 7th July, 2011 at Chilli market in Dangulbi District of Maru Local government area where three persons namely; Alhaji Ishe Bello - Chairman Meyetti Allah Dansadau District, Ex-Police Samaila Yakubu, and one unidentified Fulani man were brutally murdered by the ‘Yansakai Vigilante group. The corpse of Alhaji Ishe was burnt inside his pick-up van. The ruthless pounce on the aforementioned Fulani men further gave the vigilante the impetus to expand their operations to cover the entire Local government areas of Zamfara State and in the process, a large number of innocent Fulanis and bandits estimated over five hundred (500) men were killed and in most cases, their properties confiscated by the vigilantes.

In the year 2013, sequel to the unlawful and barbaric activities of the ‘Yansakai vigilante group in the rural areas and some isolated Fulani camps, the Fulani/Bandits organized themselves into different groups, acquired sophisticated weapons such as AK 47 rifles, Assault rifles, Double and Single barrel guns, Dane guns, General Purpose Machine gun (GPMG), etc. and planned a reprisal attack on some targeted villages which they presumed to have participated in the massacre of the Fulanis/Bandits. This

led to the scores of death in some villages such as; Kizara, Lilo, Kwokaya, Gidan kaso, Lingyado, Bagega, Unguwar Galadima, Tungar Baushe, Guru, Badarawa, Rakumi Mallamawa, Kagarawa, Cigama, Malmo, ‘Yargada, Jangeme, Madaba, Mutunji, Mashema, Dangulbi, Birnin-Magaji, Filinga, Kabaro, Tungar Rakumi, and Wonaka where a total of about 729 persons including two police officers were killed as shown in the table below;

Number of people killed in some villages of Zamfara State.

S/NO.	PLACE	NUMBER OF PEOPLE KILLED
1.	Kizara	48
2.	Lilo	50
3.	Kwokaya	52
4.	Gidan kaso	42
5.	Lingyado	25
6.	Bagega	2
7.	Unguwar Galadima	150
8.	Tungar Baushe	26
9.	Guru	28
10.	Badarawa	11
11.	Rakumi Mallamawa and Kagarawa	20
12.	Cigama	20
13.	Malmo under Dumma village	37
14.	Yargada	1
15.	Jangeme	1
16.	Madaba	58
17.	Mutunji	30
18.	Mashema	26
19.	Dangulbi	24 including one Police Officer
20.	Birnin Magaji	15

21.	Filinga	2
22.	Kabaro	19
23.	Tungar Rakumi	22 including one Police officer
24.	Zurmi	10
25.	Wonaka	10
TOTAL		729

Source: “[6], [7]”

On what would be referred to as counter attack after the 2013 reprisal killings by the Fulani/Bandits, the people of Kizara village and environs were later said to have murdered over One hundred (100) Fulanis neighbouring them as a result of which the survivors escaped to different thick forests (Hideouts) across the state and formed cells (Daba). Others relocate to other neighbouring states such as Katsina, Sokoto, Kebbi, Kaduna, and Niger States. According to Anka [6], the dialectics created has since 2011 created a big enmity between Fulani herders, farmers and rest parts of the communities in Zamfara which led to the large number of Fulanis existing the state to other alternative places. The movement is characterized by many problems ranging from reprisal attacks before departing or re-arranging for counter attacks targeting members of ‘Yansakai Vigilante group in particular. Anka [6] also reported that, the brutal attacks on ‘Yargaladima community which led to the destruction of the entire community and killing over two hundred (200) people including women and children, and other villages such as Dumburum in Zurmi, Badarawa in Shinkafi, Kizara in Tsafe and Dangulbi in Maru Local government areas were all linked to an insinuation of reprisal attacks, well arranged by members of the Bandits/Fulani herders. It is therefore pertinent to note that these attacks, counter attacks and reprisal attacks occurred almost in every part of the state and are mostly accompanied with wanton killings, destruction of properties, Theft, Cattle rustling, Abduction and Kidnapping.

INTERNAL SECURITY SITUATION IN ZAMFARA STATE

Armed banditry have become a major problem in Zamfara State [9]. This menace have been on the increase in frequency since 2011 after General elections, leading to violent conflict between the Fulanis and their allies from within and outside the country on one side and the farmers on the other. The outcome of this conflict has claimed thousands of lives and caused destruction of properties worth billions of naira in the state [8]. It could be argued that there is no village in the state that has not witnessed the impact of armed banditry. As reported by Rufa’i [10] for example in Mada district in Gusau local government area, over 12 different attacks by bandits which claimed the lives of over 20 people and 1500 herds of cattle stolen at different times from 2014 to 2016 were witnessed. Notwithstanding other violent

crimes such as rape, kidnapping, Abduction, and causing grievous hurt were also recorded with in the period. Hence, incidents of this nature are common occurrence in virtually all the villages in the state with little or no efforts from the security agencies towards preventing it or even countering it.

In-spite of the Federal governments’ efforts, by deploying more troops and Units of Mobile Police to the State, as well as the State governments’ assistance by providing logistics such as operational vehicles (437 Toyota Hilux) and financial support (N17 billion), the killings and brutality continue to take a new dimension as the bandits continue to adopt some new strategies in perpetrating their barbaric acts. Thus, making it very difficult for the security agencies to curtail their criminal activities as the bandits understand the terrain more than the security agents because there is no access road in trying to reach out to these villages whenever there is report of attack and communication by the security agencies operating along the forest is virtually impossible [6].

To alternatively manage the situation, the idea of peace deal and amnesty was initiated between Zamfara State government and the Leadership of these bandits in 2016. The State government, having reviewed the impacts of the cohesive measures especially the use of Military and Mobile Police, come to the conclusion that, the operation has not yielded the much desired result in spite of huge amount of funds expended. Hence, the State government opted for negotiations with the armed bandits with a view to surrendering their weapons to the State government as the best option for ensuring sustainable peace [11]. The State government delegation led by the Deputy governor, Malam Ibrahim Wakkala Liman and the bandits under the leadership of Buharin Daji (a.k.a. Tsoho) had their first meeting on the 15th December, 2016 at Gobirawar Chali in Dansadau Emirate under Maru Local government Area, with emphasis on three major issues during the dialogue especially with the demands from the bandits clearly spelt out; 1. ‘Yansakai Vigilante must stop the wanton attacks on their communities, 2. Security agents and Vigilante groups must stop seizing their cattle and 3. The government should not continue to neglect their communities in the area of developmental projects. The government agreed to their demands and emphasized that, for the amnesty to deal to be perfected, the bandits must surrender their arms and should promise not to invade any community while the peace deal lasted. The government also proposed some strategic measures of integrating the bandits back to their communities by providing soft grant for them to commence business as well as bringing some of them closer to the government [6].

Having enjoyed about nine (9) months of relative peace in the state as a result of the peace deal entered into with the bandits and Amnesty programme introduced by the State government, the peace deal was however breached most especially with the resurgence of fresh killings in some communities along Shinkafi, Tsafe, Maru and Maradun Local government Areas, with multiple number of death and loss of Properties worth millions of naira. The new violence was characterized with

brutal and wanton killings, sexual intimidation among women and children and kidnapping for ransom. It was described as the most tragic in the history of the State and the most inhuman maltreatment against humanity. This ugly development emerged at a time when people believed that, the peace deal entered into between the State government and the bandits would serve as a panacea to the crises. The failure of the peace deal was attributed to many factors among which include; Absence of the political will from the side of the State government to implement the agreement it has entered with the bandits, Non-implementation of rehabilitation and reconstruction measures to bring succor to the victims of this conflicts, as well as re-arresting of some members of the bandits by the operatives of the Department of Security Service (DSS) after they have signed the peace deal with the State. As stated by Shehu [12], the peace pact was jeopardized after a close associate of Buharin Daji called "Dogo Bangaje" was intercepted, arrested and detained by the DSS. Others blamed the **operation-SHARAN DAJI** launched against the bandits by the Nigerian Army as responsible for the fresh violence while others were of the opinion that, As some of the armed bandits leaders heard about the huge amount of money being dashed out to Buharin Daji and his camp plus the juicy appointment by the State government, they decided to establish their own popularity so that their plight can equally be considered by the State government [6].

Whatever might have been the ulterior motive for the fresh attacks by the bandits, the Federal government has taken drastic measures with a view to curtailing this present situation especially with the intervention of the under President Muhammadu Buhari ordering a Military crackdown on bandits operating in rural communities in Zamfara State in a renewed **operation-HARBIN KUNAMA**, following fresh attacks on some communities in Shinkafi and Maradun Local government areas [13]. To enable the Military carry out this new mandate, the president has approved the request of the Minister of Defence, Gen. Mansur Dan-Ali (rtd), for the stationing of the full Battalion of Special Forces in Zamfara State. And operationalizing of the newly established 8 Division of the Nigerian Army in Sokoto in the new order of Battle (OBAT). The President has also approved the movement of the 1 Brigade of the Nigerian Army from Sokoto to Gusau upon take-off of the 8 Division. Apart from the effort made by the presidency, the upper legislative chamber has also passed a resolution mandating its standing committee on security to ascertain the cause of the fresh killings in Zamfara State and recommend ways to avert its re-occurrence. In June 2018, apart from the additional troops and mobile police men deployed to the state, another operation was also launched by the Nigerian Air force called **OPERATION-DIRANMIKIYA** which has led to heavy bombardment of the bandits' hideouts in sububu forests as a result of which large number of bandits killed and their camps destroyed. [14].

Even with the drastic measures taken through the military might, more than twenty communities were thereafter attacked

by these hoodlums. And despite the Breaking news of the sudden death of the notorious bandits' leader, Buharin Daji, who was later confirmed to have been killed during an encounter with another rival group led by Dogo Gide, the spate of attacks by the bandits on rural communities persist with even greater magnitude resulting to wanton killings and many communities becoming internally displaced. "[15], [16]".

Currently, in Zamfara state, towns and villages are being attacked by bandits almost on daily basis. People are killed, kidnapped for ransom, women raped, hundreds of cattle rustled, traders robbed, houses and markets destroyed, farming proscribed by bandits; those who cultivated crops have been warned not to venture near their farms [17]. There is wanton destruction of lives and properties and high level of human rights violation going on in Zamfara State [17]. Armed banditry has created a large number of destitute, orphans, widows and internally displaced persons in the rural areas of Zamfara state due to constant raiding, theft, raping and kidnapping. The village of Badarawa in Shinkafi local government area, is another area hit by the bandits' attacks. The village head compiled a list of 318 widows, orphans and destitute who lost loved ones in the various attacks carried out by the bandits in 2015 alone [10]. The levels of attacks in these areas are less compared to Anka, Maru, and Tsafe that witnessed frequent attacks and recorded casualties, as a result of so many villages that were being raided, so many people killed, indiscriminately, women raped, and livestock carted away by the bandits. As it is presently, the lack of adequate internal security due the threat of armed banditry, has put Zamfara State at the top of list of major flash points of rural violence in Nigeria.

BANDITS' MODUS OPERANDI, HIDEOUTS AND ROUTES

According to victims and security experts, armed bandits' attacks were mainly on rural communities. It could be argued that there is no village in Zamfara state that has not witnessed the impact of armed banditry. In carrying out their heinous act, the bandits use dangerous weapons such as AK 47 Rifles, General Purpose Machine Gun (GPMG), Double or Single Barrel guns, Dane guns, Local pistols, Machetes, knives and Sticks. The attacks in most of the cases result to the wanton destruction of lives and properties and high level of human rights violation. They usually strike during the night and in many cases they attack in large numbers using motorbikes which give them added advantage as to easily escape immediately before the arrival of the security agents. Hence, the bandits understand the terrain more than the security agents. In some cases, they fire shots sporadically and kill unsuspecting persons indiscriminately before carting away animals, raping women or kidnapping for ransom [18].

Armed bandits who terrorized villages in Zamfara State perpetrate their criminal acts along different routes which cut across different parts of the state and the neighbouring states of Katsina, Kaduna, Niger, Sokoto, and Kebbi State. Their major hideout is *Sububu forest* in Maradun L.G.A, Zamfara State. From sububu forest, the hoodlums pass through Rudunu,

Indulmu and Tangila villages to Dandabi forest in Shinkafi L.G.A, Zamfara State. From Dandabi forest, they move to *Dumburum forest* in Zurmi L.G.A of Zamfara State. From Dumburum forest, the hoodlums may either go eastwards towards Batsari forest in Katsina State or move southwards towards *Shamushalle thick forest* in Birnin-Magaji L.G.A of Zamfara State. At Shamushalle thick forest, the bandits follow Mai Jan-ido forest, through Tsabre forest to Gusami forest. From Gusami forest, they continue their journey either eastwards towards Batsari forest in Katsina State or westwards to *Ajja forest* which is another thick forest situated in Mada Area Development Council (ADC) of Gusau L.G.A. From Ajja forest, the bandits move southwards to Wonaka forest and to Fegin-mahe forest. From this point, they move eastwards heading to *Akuzo forest*. From Akuzo forest, they move to Danmusa forest in Katsina State. They further move towards Gurbin-Maikiya and Maidabino forest to Zangon-Pauwa forest in Kankara L.G.A of Katsina State. The armed bandits move to 'Yanwaren Daji forest in Tsafe L.G.A through either Akuzo forest in Mada ADC of Gusau L.G.A or via Zango-Pauwa forest in Kankara L.G.A of Katsina State. They move westwards to 'Yankuzo and Hayin Alhaji forest in Tsafe L.G.A. The armed bandits move southwards to 'Yartalata forest in Kankara L.G.A up to 'Yarmalamai/Dan'aji forest, where they burst out at 'Yankara/Sheme forest in Faskari L.G.A of Katsina State. The bandits move towards Fankama forest in Faskari L.G.A of Katsina State where they burst out at Bilbis/Magazu forest in Tsafe L.G.A of Zamfara State. The hoodlums follow cattle routes from Magazu forest to Kunchin-Kalgo/Danjibga forest where they move towards Marbe forest all in Tsafe L.G.A. From Marbe forest, they follow cattle route to Rijiya-Tsakardawa forest in Gusau L.G.A where they burst out at Tofa/Jangeme forest and then to Wanke forest all in Gusau L.G.A of Zamfara State.

From Wanke forest, the armed bandits follow a feeder road to Kekun-waje forest in Bungudu L.G.A, in which the road will lead them to Bingi forest, to Bare-bari Village and then to Gobirawa forest all in Bungudu L.G.A. From Gobirawa forest, the bandits enter Maru L.G.A through Bindin forest, where they follow cattle route to Dangulbi forest and pass through Daraga forest, Mutunji forest, Kabaro forest, Sangeku forest, and burst out at Kajiji forest in Doka village under Dansadau ADC of Maru L.G.A. At Kajiji/Doka forest, the bandits either move eastwards leading to Sabuwa forest in Katsina State or head towards south to Ayu forest in Bena District of Kebbi State or move towards south-west to Kotonkoro forest in Niger State. At the end, the bandits converge at *Janbiri forest* which serves as their permanent base. *Janbiri forest* is a thick forest located in Birnin Gwari L.G.A. of Kaduna State which shares boundary with Dansadau Area of Maru L.G.A. of Zamfara State and Sabuwa L.G.A. of Katsina State [7].

TRIGGERS OF ARMED BANDITRY IN ZAMFARA

Today, Zamfara state has become a centre of the obnoxious armed banditry in the Northern part of the country. This has affected economic development with the growth of

unemployment and democratic setback through rise of groups of armed bandits. From 2011 to date, over 4000 lives have been lost. About five hundred and thirty five (535) people (reported cases) were kidnapped and over 15,000 cattle and other livestock were rustled by bandits. In addition, not fewer than 36 communities along Dansadau, Zurmi, Shinkafi, Bakura, Maradun, Birnin Magaji, Anka, Gusau, Bukkuyum and Tsafe towns were burnt to the ground with their inhabitants displaced to alternative safer places [19].(FMOIAC 2018).

Scholars and security experts have divergent views on the causes of this menace. Where as many linked armed banditry in Zamfara State to long term human conflict between fulani herders and farmers due to struggle for ownership of farmland and grazing reserves. On the other hand, some view it as a direct effect of reaction against socio-political and economic marginalization of Fulanis by their Hausa counterparts. It is presumed that majority of those involved in this heinous act are Fulanis who stay in the forested areas and who rear cattle. However, it is pertinent to know that in some cases other people who have the knowledge on cattle rearing are directly involved. It is worth mentioning that armed banditry which is always linked with cattle rustling and kidnapping in the state is perpetrated by mostly Nigerians, and quite a number of their foreign collaborators mobilized from Niger Republic, Chad, Mali, Libya and Burkina Faso. The bandits have receivers or buyers of the rustled animals who encourage them to a large extent, to commit this heinous crime. In most cases, the bandits find their way through the thick forests bordering the state to the neighbouring country where the rustled cattle are slaughtered and sold as beef. Other factors identified as the Triggers of the banditry and kidnapping in the area under study include the following:

1. **Injustice by Traditional Rulers:** Lack of transparency in the Traditional leadership, and those involved in the dispensation of justice in matters relating to Fulani/Famers disputes.
2. **Long Historical Factor:** There exists an antagonistic relationship between the Fulanis and Farmers in the state long before now.
3. **Drug Abuse:** Among the teaming youths especially the Fulanis in the state which has bearing on criminal behaviour.
4. **Unemployment:** The large teeming Fulani youths populations in the state are unemployed, so armed banditry, Kidnapping and cattle rustling seem to be lucrative despite the risks involved. The problem of unemployment is further worsened when cattle rearers lose their herds to Bandits. This situation makes many of them to become bandits/cattle rustlers and Kidnappers in order to make up for their loss.
5. **Vulnerability:** Cattle owners in most cases prefer locations that are remote and often away from the usual settlements for grazing purposes. This makes them vulnerable to attack by bandits.

6. **Dispersed Settlement:** Most of the victims of banditry, Kidnapping and cattle rustling in the state are based in remote areas of the state without access roads or communication. And this makes it difficult for them to give timely information about any difficult situation; thereby hindering prompt response in times of distress. These remote and isolated settlements are far apart and further away from Divisional Headquarters/ Police stations or out posts.

7. **Huge Financial Benefits:** Cattle are easily marketable and costly commodities. This has encouraged more criminally minded Fulanis and other tribes to enter into the illicit activities of banditry.

8. **Proliferation of fire arms:** The aftermath of series of makes it possible and easy for the nomads and other criminally minded persons to possess firearms unlawfully.

9. **Arbitrary use of power by Vigilante groups {YANSAKAI}:** The vigilantes are not only known to be involved in extra judicial killings and amputations, they are also involved in the confiscation of the properties of their victims. The Fulanis sometimes attack communities and rustle their cattle to avenge the ill treatment meted out on them by the Yansakai.

10. **Out of Court settlement:** The Fulanis are fond of settling cases of cattle rustling internally "FALAKU". They often do not report such cases to the Police. This act encourages the young and unarmed in to big time armed bandits.

THE CHALLENGES OF COMBATTING ARMED BANDITRY IN ZAMFARA STATE

There are numerous challenges that have brought a setback in the fight against armed banditry in Zamfara State and they include;

1. **Unemployment:** There is high level of unemployment in Zamfara State especially among the youths in the rural areas. So many youths are staying idle and are leaving at the mercy of begging. There are too many young people in the villages that are jobless and without any means of livelihood. The frustration that results from this and the need for survival makes the youths vulnerable to manipulation into committing armed banditry even for a little pay.

2. **Poverty:** The rate of poverty in Zamfara State is quite alarming and the result of this is an increase in armed banditry and other social vices that add to the problem of internal security in the state.

3. **Inefficient government intervention:** Failure and lack of political will on the side of the government to fight armed banditry squarely are among the major impediments affecting the fight against armed banditry in the state.

4. **Lack of Faith in Security Agencies:** Most of the village communities or masses that were badly affected by the activities of armed bandits have lost faith in the security agencies in the state and in many cases opt to protect themselves as been exhibited by different vigilante group activities across different communities. The security agencies most especially the Police

are ill equipped and ill prepared to combat the bandits due to the myriad problems facing the organization, among which are; Inadequate logistics, Inadequate manpower, Poor welfare package, Inadequate training and retraining, Poor intelligence gathering mechanism, Inadequate communication gadgets, corruption among others.

5. **Corrupt government officials:** Corruption is a term commonly associated with government officials. Stealing public funds has become a norm. In a bid to get or stay in power, some of them fund bandits as there is a political undertone to the activities of these hoodlums. Aspirants of political offices mostly, have been known to create armies of political thugs during election periods and this usually results in eruption of violent related offences such as the ones currently being experienced in the state.

6. **Unbalanced development:** The parity in development of areas across the state is one of the major causes of armed banditry in Zamfara state. There is a feeling of partiality and marginalization amongst some Fulani communities in Zamfara State due to the imbalance in development of their various communities across the state. This causes disaffection and grievance in the people occupying such areas.

7. **Loss of sociological and communal value system:** History bears record of a time when the traditional value system of the Nigerian society as multi - ethnic as it is, was characterized by collectivism, loyalty to local authority and community, hard work, mutual harmony and coexistence, abhorrence for theft, and high value for life. A time when guns were meant for hunting animals and cutlasses or machetes for farming. Most of these communal values which made society safe and made citizens feel secure have been lost gradually over time and since the penetration of western culture. In the face of these security challenges, economic growth and development cannot be sustained.

CONCLUSION/ RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above, coupled with the fact that, activities of armed bandits are becoming worrisome in the state and the country at large, the paper recommends that the following measures be put in place with a view to curtailing the crimes to a tolerable level.

1. Dialogue with stake holders at the grass roots and establishment of information data base most especially from the areas prone to attacks.
2. The activities of the vigilante groups or Civilian JTF to be streamlined and coordinated by either the Police or Military.
3. The Federal and State Government should help in improving the operations e.g. by provision of logistics to be used during operations and the welfare of the personnel involved in the operation and equally liaising with the G.S.M network providers in the targeted areas of operation to shut down their services during the operation in order to avoid security breach.

4. Concerning unemployment, governments and private entrepreneurs should be proactive in tackling this problem through encouraging entrepreneurship and involving young graduates as well as school leavers in vocational training and skills acquisition to enable them become self-reliant and independent. The government must create enabling environment that will encourage self-reliance and not dependency on paid employment. It should as well provide an enabling environment for external investors so as to create work chances for teaming jobless youth.
5. On issue of political thuggery, the government must be able to take a decisive step in ensuring that miscreants using offensive weapons during electioneering campaigns are checkmated because the same weapons are used to commit armed banditry by the same persons in order to make ends meet.
6. Good leadership and Governance. In this regard, the state of insecurity in Zamfara State calls for a leadership that is focused, unbiased, detribalized, transparent, trustworthy, and people centred. The war against insecurity would be won only by raising governance standards that is cultivating the culture of good governance where the government is responsible and accountable to the people. Security engagement cannot be separated from good governance. The general view is that peace and security is determined by good governance.
7. Better equipped Security agencies. To overcome armed banditry in Zamfara State, there is need to modernize the security agencies, most especially the Police, with training, intelligence sharing, advanced technology, logistics, motivation and change of orientation. This effort would enhance the operational capabilities of Nigeria's Security agencies by identifying avenues that would enable them respond appropriately to the internal security challenges posed by the armed banditry in the state. In addition, there should be a complete overhaul of these institutions in the country to reflect international standard of best practices so as to pre-empt the security breaches. There is need for intelligence gathering and surveillance so that the enforcement agents could be proactive and reasonably predict crime with near perfect accuracy rather than being reactive.

Finally, policies that focus solely on single government agencies, such as security agencies or enactment of laws are unlikely to succeed. Instead, a co-ordinated preventive measure is necessary which shall be championed by the Police Force in addition to military strategies.

It is the submission of this paper that effective implementation of these measures would go a long way in addressing the menace of armed banditry and its attendant crimes in Zamfara State. In addition, there is need for a robust combination of legislative and judicial intervention with government reforms that would address some of the acute human security challenges confronting a vast majority of the population in the state.

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