

Crisis of Banditry and the Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria: A Political Economy Approach

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Abstract

Review Article

Banditry crisis in Nigeria is one of the reasons for the emergence of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the creation of Internally Displaced Persons' Camps (IDPCs). From the point of view of political economy approach, bandits attack as a result of many factors ranging from poverty and unemployment to the proliferation of arms as well as the desire to belong to the society. Managing this crisis has been difficult for the Nigerian state as adequate attention is not given to the situation; thus the increased number of displaced persons on daily basis. The study made use of secondary sources of data collection. It was discovered that banditry imposes untold hardship on the people; affecting their means of livelihood and exposing them to illegal means of sustenance. It has led to loss of lives and properties, undermined the security, peace and development of the Nigerian state and made women vulnerable to many societal ills. Efforts made by stakeholders to combat the scourge have not yielded the desired result. The paper thus recommends among others that, the over-dependence on the military to fight banditry is not the solution to the menace. There is the need to address the root causes of the banditry crisis which include poverty, unemployment, weak security system, the fragility of the Nigerian state, proliferation of arms and corruption. The government therefore should provide job opportunities for the youths; a conducive environment for the Internally Displaced Persons and plan ahead for them to return to their various homes. The government also should effectively monitor and secure the Nigerian borders with the neighbouring countries to checkmate illegal migration of people and arms proliferation. The government should re-orientate the people on ethical values and reverence for life and human rights.

Keywords: Crisis, banditry, internally displaced persons and political economy approach.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the Nigerian state has witnessed the crisis of banditry, leading to the internal displacement of persons in the country and the creation of internally displaced persons' camps (IDPCs). This crisis has affected people living in Nigeria's Zamfara, Kaduna, Sokoto, Kebbi and Katsina States in the Northwest, Benue, Niger, Nasarawa and Plateau in the North Central and Enugu in the South East. In addition to displacement, the crisis has hampered agricultural activities, disrupted the means of livelihood, heightened the risk of acute food insecurity, increased the competition by the host communities and IDPs for scarce resources such as water, land and food as well as increased fear and insecurity among the populace. As a result of the displacement, protection concerns increased for women, children and the elderly, while security, healthcare, food and water, sanitation and hygiene program (WASH) became priority needs in the

affected areas (Rosenje and Adeniyi, 2021). Women and children however are the most vulnerable groups with many women widowed and forced into becoming breadwinners and family heads which traditionally belongs to the men. Such changes therefore impact social roles. The killing of the breadwinners (fathers of the homes have left most children orphaned and having most of them unaccompanied to the displacement camps (Rosenje and Adeniyi, 2021).

The banditry crisis in Nigeria began as a farmer/herder conflict in 2011 and intensified between 2017 to date to include cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, sexual violence and killings (Mac-Leva, 2021). While changes in the ecology, environment and the scarcity of water and arable land led to communities competing viciously for limited resources, unemployment, large-scale poverty and weak local government have allowed for a steady stream of

desperate people turning to criminal activity to earn a living. Large forested areas on the other hand, allow for concealment and the formation of camps deep in the forest with the police and military personnel not able to reach these areas because they are not well equipped (American Security Project, 2021).

It has led to the disruption of socio-economic activities in general, and an atmosphere of uncertainty, a situation that has become worrisome to the citizenry. The consequences of this crisis however have collectively stimulated debates on the incidence of displacement in the country. It constitutes a threat to the peace and security of the nation and a challenge to socio-political and economic development of Nigeria. This crisis is ravaging the country's fourth republic as the number of internally displaced persons (IDP) is increasing daily with accommodation problems, hunger, rape, lack of access to education, unemployment, lack of health care services etc. The IDPs given their circumstances are denied participation in the socio-political and economic affairs of the country. The implication of it is that the prospect for development given the plight of the displaced is not feasible; banditry portends danger for socio-economic and political development. It was reported that between October, 2013 and March, 2014, 7,000 cattle were rustled from commercial livestock farms and traditional herders in Northern Nigeria (Bashir, 2014; Tauna, 2016) while about 330 attacks were made by bandits and 1,460 deaths were recorded between January and July, 2019 (Abdullahi, 2019).

The 2014 Global Peace Index, which ranked 162 countries by measures, such as security, extent of conflict, and degree of militarization, puts Nigeria as the 14 -least-peaceful countries in the world. Noting that the level of peace in Nigeria had fallen by 5% since 2008, the report rates countries like Chad, Lebanon, and Yemen as more peaceful than Nigeria (Rosenje and Adeniyi, 2021). The Boko Haram-led insurgency in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria, the frequent ethno-religious combustions in different parts of the country and the activities of ethnic militias, cattle groups and rural bandits have made Nigeria the 20th saddest country to live, according to the latest ranking by Forbes Magazine. Nigeria's global ranking along these dimensions is a consequence of the debilitating state of poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy, all of which are compounded by the failure of democratic governance and state inadequacies (Rosenje and Adeniyi, 2021).

Conceptual clarification

Crisis

A crisis is any event or period that will lead, or may lead, to an unstable and dangerous situation affecting an individual, group, or all of society. Crises are negative changes in the human or environmental affairs, especially when they occur abruptly, with little or no warning (Wikipedia, 2022).

Banditry

Banditry refers to incidences of allied violent crimes, such as kidnapping, cattle rustling, village and highway raids involving the use of force to intimidate a person or a group of persons so as to kidnap, rape, rob or kill the victims (Rosenji and Adeniyi, 2021). Bandits most times kill people who resist kidnapping or refuse to pay ransom demanded and sometimes kill those who paid ransom. The definition of banditry by Rosenji and Adeniyi would be used in this paper.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

An internally displaced person (IDP) is someone who is forced to leave his home but who remains within the country's borders. In the United Nations report (cited in Deng, 1998), internally displaced persons are "persons or group of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or man-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border". IDPs stay within their own country and remain under the protection of its government no matter what caused their displacement.

Political Economy Approach

Political economy refers to the study of the social or political processes through which public economic decisions are made. It establishes the empirical interface between politics and economy and examines the development trends and dynamics of the symmetrical relationship between economic and political processes. In this vein, Asogwa (2003:4) asserts that,

The interrelationship between political variables and economic variables becomes apparent when we recognize the fact that problems involving the scarcity of resources which is the domain of economic and the relationships of power, rule and authority which is the area of political science are not disjointed and separate problem but one that cannot be solved without the knowledge and participation of the other.

Political economy represents an interdisciplinary approach which critically and systematically examines the rationale and outcome of behavioural disposition and development within the socio-political and economic context. Nwosu (2011:20) remarks: "the study of political economy has continued to gain place of prominence in the academic area. Man is constantly pre-occupied with the task of producing and reproducing his material existence"

Furthermore, political economy lends credence to the primacy of materialism which the Marxists argue, determines the survival and development of man and his social enclave. Hence, man created and recreates his existence through labour which constitutes his most profound activity of multiple activities. However, the development, organisation and outcome of labour (the sub-structure) exist and reflect within the context of politics which represents the superstructure. Therefore, the link between politics and economy is not only conceptual but also empirical and illuminating as elucidated by Nnoli (2003:225), “the involvement of state in economic development underlines the fundamental link between politics and economic life”.

On the premise of Marx’s assertion, it becomes clear that banditry is a result of the search for material satisfaction of man. Thus, it affects the socio-political and economic development of Nigeria.

From the standpoint of the Marxist Political economy, before man can do anything, he has to eat; thus, organized crime such as banditry is an instrumental behavior; that is, a means to an end. It is an instrument of socio-economic advancement, measure to accumulate wealth and build power as well as an instrument of social elevation. This has been worsened by the prevailing socio-economic discontent and attendant livelihood crisis in the state, in addition to the attitude of the Nigerian government towards arresting the ugly situation. Often ascribed to the Marxist political economy approach that the economy which is the substructure determines the political which is the superstructure, banditry thrives in a situation where by the government’s capacity to dictate, sanction and deter crime is poor, where public corruption is endemic; and where prospects for legitimate opportunities are slim. Under such a situation, the tendency to indulge in crime is high, while deterrence from criminal living is low. The consequence of this trend therefore is the prevalence in crime rate and a state of insecurity.

Evolution and development of Banditry

From time immemorial, banditry has being in existence. It has continued to change given the time, space and context. In traditional African society, it is seen to be different from that of America and other European countries. While in the 19th-century Europe and the Americas, a bandit was a freedom warrior who sought to free the oppressed from the upper class or colonized from the colonizer (Warto, 1994), bandits in traditional African society specialized in armed robbery and other related crimes (Curott & Fink, 2008) and in Mexico, bandits like Chucho el Roto, Herachio Bernel, and Santanon were referred as heroes of Mexican freedom (Rosenje and Adeniyi, 2021). However, the State regarded them as hoodlums, miscreants, nuisance and outlaws that needed to be eliminated, in contrast to how Mexicans felt about them (Watts, 1987). The

peasants in some pre-industrial communities saw bandits as avenging parties and source of income.

In West Africa, the origin and growth of banditry can be traced to the inter-tribal era marked by conflicts and warfare for finite economic resources and territory expansion for political authority. Despite the changes in its pattern in West Africa, socio-economic and political factors have continued to play a crucial role in its understanding (Abdullahi, 2019). An example is depicted in Niger Republic’s Tillaberi and Tahoua region where cattle and sheep rustling as well as the killing of innocent citizens in border communities has a direct connection with the general impoverished position of the population caused by the country’s bad governance (Abdullahi, 2019). In Mali, the evolution and development of banditry have been related to religious extremism by sectarian religious groups and further aggravated by weak state institutions as it relates to service delivery. Rosenje and Adeniyi (2021) assert that, weak state institutions, insurgency, and lawlessness have pushed more pastoralists into religious extremism, leading to increase in bandits’ activities in northern Mali. The frequency of bandit activities has created tensions between farmers and herders as well as exacerbated the proliferation of armed groups in different regions of Mali. Along Burkinaso Faso-Ghana border, livestock theft is evolving into a transnational criminal enterprise, influencing mobility and relationships. Local bandit groups, predominantly Burkinabe, collaborate with traditional elites to rustle livestock and split the revenues (Abdullahi, 2019). However in Mauritania, trans-border banditry by local groups, as well as resource management and land distribution difficulties, explain the type and pattern of rural banditry in the country. Unlike Mali and Niger, competition for resources, particularly water, pasture, and animal feeds in Mauritania, result in a quick surge in banditry (Rosenje and Adeniyi, 2021). Thus, according to Rosenje and Adeniyi (2021), the features of banditry in Africa include kidnapping, maiming, killing, extortion and cattle rustling. Cattle rustling refer to the use of force to steal animals. Bandits therefore use force, small arms and light weapons (SALWs) to steal livestock because herdsmen do everything possible to safe-keep their herds from rustling.

The current banditry activities ravaging Nigeria started in 2011 as earlier stated. However, scholarly accounts have it that the phenomenon predated Nigeria’s emergence as a political entity. According to Rosenje and Adeniyi (2021), there were recorded instances of banditry in the colonial Nigeria as far back as the 1930s. Putting this claim in historical perspective, Rosenje and Adeniyi (2021) stated that, in those days, wayfarers and merchants travelling along our local economic roads usually faced the threats and dangers of ambush from non-descript bandits. Armed bandits and criminals were known to be targeting goods ferried on the back of donkeys, camels and ox carts.

Those bandits on our trade routes would forcefully take those goods and disappear into the bush. That is just one dimension of the problem. In another instance, the bandits would sometimes raid farming communities and villages with the intent of willful killing and wanton destruction of property. During such raids, the bandits would destroy virtually everything in their path, including valuables, farm produce, etc. This subculture has been in existence even before the coming of colonialists to the territories of northern Nigeria (Rosenje and Adeniyi, 2021). Although banditry existed in Nigeria, its current state is a transformation from a rudimentary phase to a more complex and complicated pattern of criminality (Egwu, 2016). This transformation could be understood against the backdrop of the prevailing security dialectics in Nigeria. Accordingly, gangs of criminal, often youths from farming and herding communities and/or local bandits, take advantage of the growing insecurity, fear and cyclical attacks to loot villages, engage in highway robbery, and rustle cattle for personal gain. Both farming and herding communities often suffer from this criminality (Rosenje and Adeniyi, 2021).

Factors promoting banditry in Nigeria

There exists a plethora of factors responsible for banditry in Nigeria. These include, economic factors, proliferation of arms and weak security systems among others.

Economic factors

In Nigeria, some of the arrested bandits claimed that poverty and unemployment are their motivations for kidnapping for ransom, terrorism and the evil practices of dealing with human body parts for money rituals (Mac – Leva, 2021). The high level of poverty in the country can be linked to the high rate of unemployment recorded. The National Bureau of Statistics in its last report said that the national unemployment rate stood at 33.3 per cent as at December 2020, and is estimated to have reached 45 per cent since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. With youth population estimated at 60 per cent of Nigeria's total population of about 215 million, it means that about 45 million Nigerian youths are jobless (Oladeinde, 2022).

Bandits therefore, are motivated by the desire to accumulate wealth thereby exiting from poverty and unemployment and being in the league of persons to reckon with in terms of socio-economic advancement in the society. This is the reason why collecting ransom is prevalent in banditry operations. However, where the ransom is not forthcoming, bandits become more tensed and frustrated and resort to killing their victims. They also rob, assault or liquidate a person or group of persons based on political or ideological dispositions to enrich themselves (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019). Thus, poverty and poor governance contribute significantly to the rising wave of banditry in Nigeria. The failure of

successive administrations in Nigeria to address the challenges of poverty bedeviling the nation has made life burdensome and only the fittest survive. Adebayo (2018), noted that Nigeria has overtaken India as the country with the largest number of people living in extreme poverty, with an estimated 87 million Nigerians, or around half of the country's population, estimated to be living on less than \$1.90 a day.

However, it should be borne in mind that, in as much as not all criminal acts are attributed to poverty; economic deprivation influences people to resort to illegal means of meeting their daily needs. The attractive benefits accruing from banditry activity propel most people, especially the youths to join the bandit gangs in Nigeria.

Weak security system

The weak security system complements the alarming rate of banditry in Nigeria. This is due to the inadequacies associated with the equipment for the security personnel (both in training and weaponry) and their poor attitudinal and behavioural outlook. In many cases, security personnel assigned to deal with given security situations lack the expertise and equipment to handle the situations in a way to prevent them from occurring. Even when these exist, some personnel get influenced by ethnic, religious or communal sentiment and are easily prejudiced by their personal interest to serve their people, rather than the nation. Thus, instead of being national watch dogs and defending national interest and values, and protecting people from being harmed by criminals, they soon become saboteurs of government efforts, by supporting and fuelling insecurity through either leaking vital security information or conniving with criminals to acquire weapons or to escape the long arm of the law.

Proliferation of arms

This accounts for the high rate of banditry in Nigeria. There has been an incremental influx of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) into Nigeria from the Sahel since the fall of Ghadaff's regime in Libya (Adegoke, 2019). These arms and weapons end up in the hands of non-state actors like terrorists, militants and bandits, who use them to terrorize individuals and communities. In September 2018, military troops in joint operations with personnel of the Department of State Service (DSS) arrested two suspected illicit arms' dealers along Funtua-Gusau road with 1,479 rounds of 7.62mm (special) ammunition, on their way to deliver the weapons to armed bandits (Adeniyi 2018). Incidents such as this have been prevalent in the various states of Nigeria where banditry is the order of the day.

Complex relationship between pastoralists and farmers

Banditry crisis is on the increase as a result of the complex relationship between farmers and pastoralists. This is the case of Benue state where

clashes between farmers and pastoralists have been on the increase leading to several deaths. Desertification, climate change and cattle rustling have led to migration of pastoralists or herdsmen. This migration has seen pastoralists clash with farmers over the encroachment of farmland and destruction of crops. In extreme cases, these conflicts have led to the wanton destruction of life and property of both the farmers and pastoralists, thus contributing in no small degree to the level of insecurity in the country (Uche and Iwuamadi, 2018).

Other factors include; weak leadership and corruption, the nature and character of the Nigerian state and the porosity of Nigeria's borders with her neighbouring countries.

Internally Displaced Persons' Camps in Nigeria

There are many internally displaced persons' camps in Nigeria. However, most of the buildings the IDPs live in are owned by the government while others are not- schools, churches, town halls, football fields and tents. These shelter places most times are inadequate to accommodate the number of displaced persons recorded, thus over-crowded and unsuitable in terms of sanitation and water facilities with no privacy for women. In Zamfara state according to Matawalle, banditry as at March 21st, 2022 had created 700,000 IDPs (Abdulgafar, 2022). There was the Anka camp with over 34,000 heads of households who were Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and 180,000 women and children who were IDPs in the state before they were asked to return to their various homes (Premium Times, 2021). In Kaduna state, Mariri and Mercy camps exist while Niger has twenty internally displaced persons' camps (NSEMA, 2021).

Katsina has a camp at Gidan Barki, behind the Katsina General Hospital while Benue state has two camps located at Mbawa and Abagana. Benue State had as at 14th January, 2020, 41 deaths in the internally displaced persons' camp at Abagana (Duru, 2020). The Displacement Tracking Matrix estimates the number of IDPs in three states, Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto between October 2020 to January 2021 to be around 186,820 with Katsina (80,115), Zamfara (70,110) and Sokoto (36,595) (UNHCR report, 2021).

Effects of Banditry crisis on Socio-Economic development of Nigeria

The effects of banditry crisis in Nigeria are enormous. Although it has complicated security challenges in the country, it has also led to the displacement of persons, food insecurity, health challenges, forced migration, cattle rustling, death and destruction of property.

Forced displacement

Banditry crisis has led to violent and forced displacement of persons in their country. It has also hampered their production ability for self-sustenance

and commercial purposes. About 70% of the internally displaced persons do not have sufficient food, with global acute malnutrition rates among children reported to be as high as 18% and 31% in Sokoto and Zamfara states respectively (WFP, 2019). Also, over 30.6 million people living in the affected states face increased protection concerns due to the continued escalation of the crisis (Egwu, 2016). Rapid displacement because of conflict also disrupts people's livelihood activities. As a coping mechanism, displaced people have taken to begging on the streets and engaging in menial jobs to survive. Fear and mistrust among IDPs have spread in camps as it is believed that informants and spies from banditry groups may have infiltrated IDP settlements, and are relaying vital security plans of the military to the bandits (Acaps, 2020).

These displacements have affected mostly women and children as they are mostly found in the various internally displaced persons' camps. Women found in such area therefore are vulnerable to socio-economic and socio-political insecurity. Other challenges faced by women and girls that are often reported in those camps are rape and sexual exploitation leading to unwanted pregnancies. Also, the crisis has exposed ladies to illegitimate means of sustenance such as prostitution and begging as a coping mechanism. For the men, most of them have lost their jobs as a result of displacement and have engaged in stealing and touting to make a living. Banditry crisis in Nigeria therefore undermines development, security and peace.

Impact of the banditry crisis on the internally displaced persons in Nigeria

The challenges faced by internally displaced persons in Nigeria are numerous. Firstly, internally displaced persons suffer worse violations of their human rights. These rights consist of liberty right to private and family life, dignity of human person, right to freedom of movement, personal right to life, and so on. The guiding principles on internal displacement state that, IDPs are entitled to enjoy without discrimination, the same rights and freedoms under international and domestic law as do other persons in their country. The principles establish that IDPs must not be discriminated against simply because of their displacement, or because of their race, sex, language, religion, social origin or other similar factors (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2022).

Also, internally displaced persons face the challenges of breakdown in family structure, loss of lives and properties, lack of income, hunger, malnutrition and insecurity. Internally displacement persons sometimes lose their lives in the process of fleeing their place of residence when attacked while some others die in the camp.

According to the 'National Emergency Management Agency' (NEMA), the displacement of children in their large numbers as a result of the bandit attacks has affected their education. Bandits have kidnapped school children, killed their teachers and destroyed infrastructures. This is the case in the northern part of Nigeria. However, in the case where these displaced children are able to access education, the quality is usually below the standard and poor due to the nature of the environment which is not good for learning as well as the lack of teaching aids. In most cases, teachers that are incompetent volunteer to teach these children (Abdulzeez, 2016). NEMA outlined the problems of children as not been able to acquire education as a result of displacement and those of them who flee homes without knowing where they can find their families.

Livelihood

Displaced people often lose assets when they are forced to flee their home and land. They may also be unable to pursue their former work, leading to unemployment, underemployment or informal work, and a significant drop in income. Livelihood loss may lead to reduced access to food and an increase in malnutrition. It may also leave people unable to pay for contraception or push them to engage in transactional sex, with subsequent rises in pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection (STI) rates. Not only are displaced people deprived of the land and natural resources that provided them with food before displacement, they also tend to have less money available to buy it. Chronic food shortages may lead to malnutrition, increasing the risk of respiratory and gastrointestinal infections, particularly among children.

Health

Displacement affects people's physical and mental health, especially when unplanned, poorly managed, or prolonged. This puts them in danger; they die at a higher rate than the general population, mostly from communicable diseases. Displacement has been linked to be responsible for poor reproductive health and increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Social life

Internal displacement affects the social life of those involved by breaking up communities and families. When it lasts long, it may permanently damage relationships that existed in areas of origin but also create new networks in the places that internally displaced persons (IDPs) move to. These relationships are important for stability, business and wellbeing. Their disruption may have repercussions for mental health, livelihood opportunities and security. Reduced access to education can also harm social life in the short and longer term, with ripple effects on livelihoods, mental health and security.

The Internal displacement of persons affects the lives of displaced people, their host communities and those they leave behind in many ways. The most urgent are threats to their physical safety, wellbeing and human rights. It can also have significant and long-lasting effects on socioeconomic development. Through the harm it causes to people's physical health, psychological wellbeing and environment, their ability to secure a livelihood and their access to security, education, housing, basic infrastructure and a social life, internal displacement can weigh heavy on the economy at the individual, community and even national level. The financial resources needed to support those affected and the reduction in production and consumption that a displacement crisis can cause represent a cost that cannot be estimated.

Displacement impacts livelihoods, the environment, housing, infrastructure, social life, education, and security. It's a vicious circle for both the displaced people and their hosts.

Efforts made by the Nigerian government to manage banditry crisis

The federal and state government in different ways have tried to manage the banditry crisis but their efforts have been rather reactionary than proactive. Some of the efforts made include; the use of dialogue, payment of ransom (although it has often being denied as being used), air bombardment and withdrawal of telecommunication services, the use of women soldiers on the highway etc.

The use of dialogue, settlement and peace missions

Nigerian government has not done much to quell the banditry crisis causing the displacement of persons in the country. However, for the efforts already put in place, positive results have not being achieved. Some strategies adopted as a means to quell the crisis; militarized and non-militarized, involving peace initiatives and amnesty programs by the affected states have not made any difference, rather, the situation worsened. In 2014, the Nigerian police force led by Inspector General Suleiman Abba set in motion, a taskforce on cattle rustling and associated crime to patrol and operate as intelligence gathering on anti-rustling and related crimes as well as investigating and prosecuting reported cases of such crimes (Yusuf, 2015). The taskforce however has been inactive since it was created. Nevertheless, in July 2015, the governors of Niger, Kaduna, Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara entered into an agreement to fund a joint operation to be undertaken by the Nigerian military, Directorate of State Security (DSS), the Police and Nigerian Civil Defense Corps. The objective was to clear Kamuku/Kuyanbana Forests which border all the states, of bandits and rustlers (Abba, 2015). However, an operation in August led to the recovery of hundreds of cattle. In collaborating this, Rosenji and Adeniyi (2021), stated that with the 'Operation Sharan Daji

initiative by the Niger state government, a total of 118 cows and 28 sheep were recovered from bandits. The same medium of joint patrol operation was also put in place by the Katsina State government in late 2015. However, the most innovative response came from the Kaduna State government. The government of Kaduna state took the following steps; embedding security agents amongst herders to protect them against bandits; tightening state borders to prevent trans-border influx of bandits; and, most importantly, implanting computer microchips in the animals to monitor their movements and prevent armed bandits from stealing them. The Kaduna initiative, termed the “El-Rufai Model,” represents a proactive and pre-emptive approach by the use of information and communication technology (ICT) (Rosenji and Adeniyi, 2021). However, it remains a proposal, and nobody knows when it will be implemented.

The government also proposed some strategic measures of integrating the bandits back to their communities by providing soft grants for them to commence business as well as bringing some of them closer to the government (Mustapha, 2019). Nevertheless, various state actions have reduced the incidence of bandit attacks and cattle rustling for some times. On several occasions, thousands of cattle were recovered and returned to owners. For example, on 7th March, 2016 the joint patrol team put in place by the Katsina government recovered 12,000 cattle within a few days of operation. In addition, a number of bandits were arrested and prosecuted. The security forces have also been able to invade some of the rustlers’ hideouts, with the aid of the military forces (Rosenje and Adeniyi, 2021). Also, the federal government increased expenditure on procurement of arms from the United States of America especially the super tucano helicopters to fight insecurity generally.

In addition to managing the crisis, some state governments in 2016, embarked on dialogue and settlement in order to put an end to the crisis. Such interventions came from Zamfara Kaduna, Katsina and Sokoto government. The government of these states also embarked on peace mission by paying money as compensation to those they identified as leaders of the bandits while in addition, Sokoto, Katsina, and Zamfara offered amnesty to the bandits hoping that they will renounce their banditry activities, kidnapping and put down their weapons.

The situation was however worsened by the inability of the amnesty and peace deal programmes inaugurated by the Katsina and Zamfara governors to survive the test of time. With some of the bandits partially surrendering their weapons on 6th December 2019, the crisis was thought to reduce as negotiations continued but it did not, given that the two most powerful banditry groups (Buharin Daji and Dogo Gyedi) and other people did not participate in the peace

pacts. However, the peace deal which appeared to grant more concessions to the Fulani while overlooking the Hausas also stirred Hausa/Fulani ethnic conflagrations, and increased tensions between Hausa vigilantes and Fulani herders who are now all loosely labeled ‘bandits’ and ‘kidnappers’ by some parts of the population (Acaps, 2020).

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From all indications, the strategy of dialogue, settlement and peace mission failed to manage the banditry crisis. However, it clearly showed the economic desire behind the crisis not minding the displacement it has caused a lot of persons.

Air bombardment and seizure of telecommunication services

The inability of the government in 2018 to reach an agreement with the bandits in order to settle the crisis situation made the Nigerian Air Force to commence aerial bombardments in a joint military operation involving the air force, army police and civil defense to flush out the bandits. The air force made use of helipads. In Zamfara state in 2020, 125 bandits were killed and others wounded in operations (Adam, 2021). However, the operation did not deter the group, it worsened the crisis and civilian casualties were recorded from the military raids in 2021. Nevertheless, the shutdown of telecommunication services in Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina and Sokoto helped to checkmate criminal activities. However the operation was undermined by lack of support by ground troops as bandits moved from one location to another to evade the aerial bombardments. Similarly, the shutting down of telecommunication services was not uniformly done across the north-west.

Deploying women soldiers

In order to manage the banditry crisis in Kaduna state regarded as the epicenter of banditry and strengthen the security operations in the A2 Abuja-

Kaduna expressway, about three hundred (300) women soldiers were sent to the area in January 2021. In the first month of deployment, the A2 highway was free of abductions. But the A235 Kaduna-Kajuru-Kachia route and surrounding communities experienced a spike in attacks and abductions (The conversation, 2022).

Senate's prohibition of ransom payment to kidnapers

Although the government never accepted that it paid ransom to have some kidnapped individuals released, the state governments in 2020 renounced negotiation with bandits. They however discouraged families from paying ransom to bandits for the release of their loved ones as such will make kidnapping for ransom less attractive. The Nigerian senate however passed a bill imposing jail terms of at least 15 years for paying a ransom to have someone kidnapped freed from the kidnapers. This is to curb the country's spiraling and lucrative kidnapping industry. Nevertheless, the approval of this bill remains unclear.

The bill however attracted public criticism as the members of the public feared the loss of lives of loved ones if ransom is not paid to rescue them. According to Lawal Ado, a Nigerian Businessman, having paid a ransom three times to secure the freedom of my loved ones, I am not impressed by moves to outlaw payments to kidnapers. Mr. Ado said his two daughters were travelling in a police convoy along the Buruku road in Kaduna state, a notorious flashpoint for the criminal gangs, when they were abducted in December. They were held for 15 weeks, and only freed after he paid a ransom of 10m naira (\$24,000, £19,000) in cash, he told the BBC. A few years ago, his wife was kidnapped from their home in Kaduna city and she was released after he paid 700,000 naira. His mother - seized while travelling to her home village, also in Kaduna state - was freed after he paid 300,000 naira. Mr Ado said that when confronted by the reality of armed men threatening the lives of those closest to you, you have no choice but to come up with the cash. According to Lawal, lawmakers were opposed to ransom payments only because "they have not had a family member kidnapped". The lawmakers however argue that such payments fuel the kidnapping industry, where criminal gangs randomly seize people and demand anything from \$50 to \$1m (Nduka, 2022).

Speaking on the spiraling and lucrative kidnapping industry, SBM Intelligence, a think -tank based in Lagos stated that, since 2011, kidnapers have collected at least \$18m, with more than half of it between 2016 and 2020 (Nduka, 2022).

Proscription of bandits as terrorist

With the activities of the bandits on the increase, a federal high court in its ruling compelled the federal government of Nigeria to proscribe bandits as terrorists. The essence was to ensure strict sanctions on

the bandits but this did not stop the group from her evil activities. Recent terror attacks by the group include an ambush of the convoy of a deputy governor; killing of 11 soldiers at a military base; the Kaduna airport attack; the Kaduna-bound passenger train attack; and kidnap of students of the Zamfara State College of Health Technology, Tsafe (Nduka, 2022).

State governments' advice to residents to take up arms against bandits

With the rising spate of banditry in Zamfara and Benue states, the government of the states asked the residents to arm themselves with weapons for self-defense. The government of Zamfara stated its readiness to facilitate the securing of basic weapons for the people, especially farmers, to defend themselves against raiders (Tarkaa *et al.*, 2022). The Zamfara state commissioner for information, Ibrahim Magajo Dosara in a press statement said the commissioner of police had been directed to issue gun licenses to those eligible to bear arms. However, people must apply from the commissioner of police the license to own guns and such other basic weapons to be used in defending themselves (Tarkaa *et al.*, 2022).

The Benue State governor on his part stated that since the agenda of the terrorists is to kill all people of the state and occupy their land, the indigenes of Benue should defend their communities in any way they can. He said,

Let no one take our being law abiding for weakness; enough is enough. If the herdsmen are carrying AK-47 to defend themselves, other citizens should do the same to protect themselves. We cannot allow ourselves to be seen as second-class citizens in our fatherland. We thought the federal government which is in charge of all the security architectures in the country would come to our aid but from the look of things, the federal government is overwhelmed. We know what to do and now is the time to do what we know (Tarkaa *et al.*, 2022).

Despite the measures above put in place by the federal and state government to fight banditry, bandits have continued to invade different parts of the country to destroy lives and properties. Thus, government's responses are inefficient, slow and reactive.

CONCLUSION

The crisis of banditry is one of the causes of the internal displacement of persons in Nigeria. This situation is alarming and needs urgent attention as lives and properties are destroyed on daily basis and the challenges faced by the internally displaced persons are enormous and downgrading. However, the management of this crisis has not produced any positive result, thus the constant displacement of persons and the high incidence of kidnapping as one of the activities of the

bandits which is highly lucrative as it yields high monetary benefits for them. From the perspective of the Marxist political economy, bandits engage in banditry because of the economic benefits deriving from it. The paper thus discovered that the need for material satisfaction; poverty, unemployment among others account for banditry and banditry activities lead to the displacement of persons thereby causing harm to the internally displaced. It therefore concludes that, the internal displacement of persons arising from the crisis of banditry is a problem to the displaced persons, the state and its management is a problem too. Given the situation, Nigeria's socio-economic development and security are at stake due to the alarming rate of banditry. Thus the government should be proactive in managing the crisis of banditry rather than reactive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To manage the crisis of banditry and the internally displaced persons in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The Nigerian government should make available, job opportunities for the youths to minimize banditry activities which economic factors are tagged as reasons for the crisis.
- ii. Also, the government of Nigeria should address its security challenges and the displaced persons given that the two issues are inter-dependent. When the security crisis is addressed, the level of displacement will reduce.
- iii. The Nigerian government should equip its security forces to enable them protect lives and properties.
- iv. Nigerians should be orientated on the need to have reverence for life and human right and the need for tolerance and co-existence amongst the different ethnic groups.
- v. Finally, all the borders dividing Nigeria and other countries should be under strict surveillance while trans-border crimes should be checked as it is one of the factors increasing banditry in Nigeria

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