



DISSECTING ARMED BANDITRY IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: EVOLUTION, TRAJECTORIES AND STATE RESPONSES

Olawale James Gbadeyan,¹

This paper examines armed banditry not only as an inherent form of violence but also as a catalyst for reconstituting violent conflicts within the evolving landscape of northern Nigeria. Adopting qualitative methods, with 31 Key Informant Interviews and 6 Focus Group Discussions in the 3 of the most affected LGAs in Zamfara State, the findings reveal that various forms of violence intersect in complex ways with armed banditry, highlighting crucial implications for understanding the spectrums and trajectories of conflicts in the region. Although the government's counter-banditry program, which employs military reconnaissance and raids, is praiseworthy, operational challenges, particularly a lack of expertise in the region's topography, have impeded its effectiveness. Consequently, the study recommends moving beyond state-centric responses to embrace community-based initiatives and dialogues addressing the longstanding perceived marginalisation and exclusion of populations susceptible to bandit recruitment.

Key words: armed banditry, bandits, state responses, Northern Nigeria

JEL: D75, F52

1 INTRODUCTION

In response to the changing dynamics of insecurity across the Sahel region, Nigerian public discourse has become increasingly focused on what has been called "armed banditry or "rural banditry." The increasing incidence of rural banditry, particularly across Nigeria's northwestern and central states, has led to widespread concern among security personnel, academics, policymakers, and civilians seeking to understand its root causes and formulate strategies for preventing and containing it. However, despite its salience, armed banditry, sometimes referred to as rural banditry, has been an elusive and under-researched concept in the field of armed conflict and security studies in Nigerian scholarship. Most contemporary analyses of insecurity in

¹ Olawale James Gbadeyan Ph.D., Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, Faculty of Liberal Studies, Osun State University, Oke Bale Street 210001 Osogbo, Nigeria, e-mail: olawale.gbadeyan@uniosun.edu.ng.  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3566-1450>

Nigeria continue to emphasise non-state armed groups such as Boko Haram or other forms of criminality, such as ethnic or religious violence (Ochu et al., 2023). By focusing on armed banditry and the broader dynamics of insecurity in Nigeria, this study represents a novel interdisciplinary contribution to the field. By combining ethnographic observations with the critical and theoretical tools of geography, geopolitics, and African studies, this study explores how local communities in the northwestern State of Zamfara experience and respond to insecurity. Such an approach enables new insights into what rural banditry is, how it operates, and crucially, its implications for everyday understandings of governance, resistance, and the role of the State in Nigeria.

To achieve this, the study examines trajectories in armed banditry activity by identifying the spatial and temporal patterns of banditry activities, tracing the roots and emergence of armed banditry and understanding forces driving increasing violence and decreasing poverty as well as critically examining the various state responses to the incursion of armed banditry and how this helps in diminishing or escalating the impacts, and to trace the roots of armed banditry in Nigeria.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Armed banditry has become a current and significant menace to the national security of Nigeria. Experts and researchers have consistently identified various factors contributing to Nigeria's current security situation. These include poverty, conflicts between herders and farmers, the presence of warlords, areas without effective governance or ungoverned space, transnational criminal networks, and the increase in the availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) from Libya. These dynamics have been highlighted by commentators and scholars, including Ojo (2020), Ojo et al. (2023), and Oyewole et al. (2022).

Understanding the nature of armed banditry in Nigeria and deciding whether to categorise such a group as terrorism or organised crime is a significant difficulty. While the group has incorporated specific operational strategies from organisations like Boko Haram, ISWAP, and Ansaru, its early emergence followed a route rooted in organised criminal activities driven by economic opportunism. Nevertheless, a recent revolution has occurred in the entity's operations, strategies, structure, and organisational patterns. Although the Nigerian government has labelled the organisation as a terrorist, the entrapment should be evaluated in the context of its current characteristics. Defining armed banditry necessitates meticulous analysis (Azeez, 2020; Abdulrasheed, 2021; Ojo, Aina and Oyewole, 2024).

According to Osasona (2023), armed banditry is a form of criminal activity that closely resembles activities such as kidnapping, theft, armed robbery, and property destruction. Armed banditry, when considered within the framework of organised crime that is deeply entrenched in the illegal economy, is primarily driven by economic incentives. Organised crime, commonly referred to as a sort of criminal enterprise,

frequently includes the deliberate destruction of properties, the infliction of harm on people, and the acquisition of victims' belongings by the use of force. Armed bandits, in this sense, refer to criminal syndicates that forcibly take away possessions, such as livestock and money, from civilian populations and engage in acts of sexual violence. (Ojo et al., 2023)

Ojewale (2023) found that armed bandits have a quasi-arrangement characterised by a coordinated command structure comparable to militias worldwide. These bandits primarily operate in rural areas and wield lethal firearms like AK-47 rifles. Examining rural attachment, one may propose that armed banditry activities are centred in places that lack effective governance by state authorities. This area exhibits a minimal government presence, with the notable absence of police and other security agencies responsible for upholding law and order. In certain regions, the prevalence of informal government is heightened, with coordination mainly facilitated by traditional institutions. This type of setting provides a sanctuary for criminal organisations that encourage illegal actions driven by materialistic motives.

Similarly, Obi & Iwuoha (2023) argued that armed banditry is driven by the desire to acquire economic resources through acts of looting, robbery, intimidation, and physical attack. Armed bandits employ force or extortion to deprive individuals of their possessions. It has also encompassed the act of acquiring and controlling sources of income, such as animals, which are subsequently sold in several locations. The primary culprits of armed banditry in Nigeria, as identified in the literature, are the Fulani, Hausa, Kanuri, and other ethnic groups who utilise Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) throughout their operations (Obi & Iwuoha, 2023; Ojo, 2020).

The discourse on the theoretical underpinnings of armed banditry in Nigeria emphasises the importance of many perspectives. Arising from various viewpoints, such as resource conflict, organised crime, political violence, and ethno-religious perspectives, the use of overlapping discourse to comprehend armed banditry in Nigeria continues to be a subject of controversy. While certain researchers depend on a solitary origin for its inception, others integrate these diverse viewpoints to examine its historical development and transformative path.

A prominent theory attributes armed banditry in Northwestern Nigeria to resource-based conflicts between Fulani pastoralists and farmers stemming from rivalry for natural resources. Fulani pastoralists in the Sahel region consistently seek greener pastures to feed their herds due to climate-induced drought. Host communities are sedentary farmers, yet herds disrupt farmlands, leading to conflicts between the two groups. Additionally, farmers kill cattle to protect farm crops, and local communities may rustle cattle. Events often lead to conflict between Fulani pastoralists hunting for lost animals and farmers who suffer damage to their crops (Ojo, 2023).

Another approach focuses on ungoverned areas where criminal gangs grow due to weak state oversight. Ungoverned spaces are remote areas where local inhabitants

experience no government presence. Local residents in these locations are ruled by informal authorities. Here, rules are rooted in local customs and traditions (Ojo, 2020). Competition for natural resources in ungoverned areas has led to a new perspective on armed bandits in Nigeria. According to Ojewale (2021), terrorist groups collaborate with those who sponsor armed banditry to gain access to mining areas. It implicitly highlights state involvement in armed banditry. Ojewale (2021) noted further that criminal gangs use violence to displace local residents, including in mining areas, in addition to livestock rustling (allowing for their operations).

The partnership between armed bandits and the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) in northwestern Nigeria underscores the severity of the conflict in the evaluation of the terror-crime nexus. There is conjecture regarding the collaboration between armed bandits and the terrorist group known as ISWAP. This alliance has the potential to offer armed bandits operating in Nigeria with training, logistics, recruitment techniques, and operational mobility (Ojo et al., 2023).

3 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a multidisciplinary approach to provide a thorough analysis of armed banditry in Northern Nigeria. This encompasses historical and socio-economic analyses, as well as qualitative methods. In terms of the historical investigation, we conducted a review of the pertinent academic, policy and news analysis literature. However, given the persistence of the menace of banditry and the scarcity of empirical studies on the discourse, the review was not confined to peer-reviewed articles alone; policy documents, grey literature, and news reports considered important were also incorporated in sketching the development of banditry in Nigeria. This was complemented by a comprehensive investigation of the socio-economic climate in Nigeria, through the analysis of major international indices and reports. The various socio-economic factors relevant to banditry were mapped to ensure comprehensive coverage in our analysis.

The qualitative data collection exercise was conducted in the three senatorial zones of Zamfara State, namely Zamfara North, Zamfara Central, and Zamfara West. Hence, Gusau (ZC), Zurmi (ZN), and Anka (ZW) LGAs represent each of the three senatorial zones. The selected LGAs of Anka, Gusau, and Zurmi have been the most hit by armed banditry in the State. In all of these, thirty-one purposively sampled respondents were carefully selected for the study and interviews were conducted with respondents from diverse backgrounds, primarily traditional rulers, farmers and pastoralists, village and district heads, security personnel, heads of vigilante Units, journalists, as well as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Heads of IDP Camps. The researcher visited the troubled communities multiple times from June 2024 to February 2025 to observe and conduct interviews. Between January and March 2025, the researcher also took time to conduct 6 FGD sessions with people who suffer internal displacement or have been

personally affected by armed banditry, governmental and non-government organisations and journalists who have reported on the issue in Zamfara State between January 2023 and December 2024. This was done to allow for real-time verification of the historical and socio-economic factors. This approach, which integrates historical research, contemporary socio-economic analysis, and the collection of interviews, has provided a multi-layered and detailed understanding of the root causes and developmental trajectories of armed banditry in Nigeria. It also enabled the study to progress beyond the existing literature, which has often focused on only one of these research areas.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Evolution and prevalence of armed banditry in Northern Nigeria

There are currently three conflicting theories regarding the evolution, development, and nature of banditry in Northern Nigeria. The first viewpoint considers banditry as a result of terrorism and a continuation of the historical Fulani jihad in the twentieth century, which specifically targeted farming communities in northern Nigeria. The Global Terrorism Index (2015) argues that the nature of terrorism in Nigeria differs from that in Iraq and Afghanistan. The terrorist activity in Nigeria exhibits similarities to the strategies employed by organised criminal syndicates and gangs, with a greater emphasis on armed assaults, including firearms and knives, rather than the use of bombings, which is more characteristic of larger terrorist organisations. The Fulani militants, a terrorist group from Nigeria, ranked as the fourth most lethal terrorist group in 2014. This represents a significant increase from their previous ranking, as they had not been among the deadliest groups before. The death toll caused by the Fulani militants rose dramatically from 63 in 2013 to 1,229 victims in 2014.

The second perspective is an alternative and contentious account of the evolution of banditry in the region. This viewpoint posits that banditry is a state-sanctioned crime with genocidal intentions. The school perceives banditry as a form of violence that is supported by external forces with the intention of reducing the population of communities and promoting the spread of Islam in the northern regions of Nigeria, specifically in areas that are not predominantly Hausa- or Fulani-dominated. The perspective is mostly shaped by popular dissatisfaction with the government's ineptitude in managing the crisis (ACAPS, 2020).

The third, which seems to be the most prevailing, connects rural banditry to the mismanagement of conflicts between farmer-pastoralists in Northern Nigeria. Responses from the in-depth interviews reveal that rural banditry is closely linked to the ongoing conflict between Fulani herders and crop farmers. This conflict may be influenced by broader factors such as identity politics and intergroup relations, including the dynamics between pastoralist groups and the Nigerian state system. Transhumant pastoralists are often perceived as aggressive and are sometimes equipped with weapons to confront unprepared crop farmers. The farmers accuse them of deliberately causing damage to

crops through their animals. Conversely, the herders consider themselves as victims of political exclusion, lacking representation within the Nigerian state system (Ojewale et al, 2024).

Initially, there are shreds of evidence to suggest that the current wave of armed banditry in Nigeria, especially in the northern region, began in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This was a period characterised by internal security challenges and conflicts, such as the ethnic and religious violence that erupted in the northern city of Kaduna in 2000 and the introduction of Sharia law in many northern states. As Gettleman (2018) explains, "gang leaders began to hire disenfranchised young men as hit men in the emerging battles over religion." Therefore, there is a linkage between the use of youth groups and political militia groups in the recurrence of violence in the North and the beginning of armed banditry in the region. This period, commonly referred to as the early stage of the Fourth Republic, saw the dominion of retired military generals in the political landscape and was associated with the proliferation of vigilante groups, political militias, and ethno-religious organisations (Osadola and Emah, 2022). These groups of youths were either co-opted by politicians to advance their cause or were used as a means of pressuring the government to respond to the demands of these various interest groups. This resulted in the political elites and security agencies manipulating these groups to suppress rival groups or opposition in some parts of the country. As Nwokora (2015) observes, "While these given roles of the [various] groups in each regime continue, they have created a well-worn path for the use of patronage networks, corruption, and violence to securitise and control state power. These tendencies have continued to entrench the survival of non-state armed groups in Nigeria, of which many end up resorting to criminal activities."

Maiangwa (2018) asserts that the symbiotic relationship between the art of governance and the use of both State and Non-State Violent Groups (NSVGs) meant that "violence has become a normalised form of communication and interaction among society." He notes that the vitality of violence in Nigerian society, that is, this growing cultural acceptance of violence and the monopoly of its interpretation by the prevailing government, has had a significant impact on the evolution and entrenchment of armed banditry today. It is in the light of this historical exploration and, as Baba (2012) notes, the exacerbating factors and causes of violence in the North that the extent and chronology of the proliferation of political militias from the return to civilian rule in 1999 and the spread of violence and banditry are often analysed to reflect the position of the North within the Nigerian nation.

Several factors contribute to the evolution of banditry in Nigeria, including climate change, the growing availability of arms, and increasing competition over resources. First, with the encroaching desertification in the northern regions, the frequency of droughts has increased, which forces herders, especially in the Fulani ethnic group, to migrate southward in search of arable land for grazing (Gbadeyan and Osadola, 2023b). This has led to more clashes with sedentary farming communities, many of which

have formed local militias to defend their land against what they perceive as "invasive" herders. These militias, initially set up to provide community defence, have increasingly become involved in criminal activities and banditry over the years.

Another major factor believed to have been responsible for rural banditry in the regions is attributed to the trafficking of small arms and ammunition. The widespread availability of arms has drawn the attention of scholars and professionals, particularly since the end of the Cold War (Adeleye and Osadola, 2022). Estimates regarding the number of bandit groups and bandits in the Northwestern region have been diverse. However, a prominent Nigerian researcher on banditry asserts that there are approximately 120 bandit camps in the region and that the bandits possess over 60,000 AK-47 rifles (Rufai, 2021). According to a clergy member chosen by bandits to act as a mediator with the government, there are around 100,000 armed bandits in the north-west region (Odeniyi, 2024).

Moreover, a prominent figure in the community within one of the six states impacted by the crisis in the North-west region asserted that there exists a staggering number of over 30,000 armed bandits actively carrying out operations alone in Zamfara State. Certain factions possess significant weaponry and maintain a network of individuals who cooperate with them within the security services and broader society. These factions are well-funded and possess extensive knowledge of the region's intricate topography (GJF, 2021).

The global proliferation of small arms is regarded as the source of various negative consequences, such as civil wars, organised crime, and the transformation of minor insurgents into internationally recognised terror groups. This is exemplified by the situation of armed banditry in Nigeria's North-west. The proliferation of weaponry among citizens seeking firearms is increasingly fueling an internal "arms race" within the region. Armed criminals acquire weapons with the purpose of assaulting the Nigerian government and questioning its exclusive control over the use of force by state actors. Also, the fact that neighbouring countries like Libya and Mali have been plunged into chaos as a result of civil wars after the Arab Spring has led to the proliferation of arms and light weapons in the Sahel region as a whole. Northwestern states such as Kebbi, Zamfara, and Katsina have experienced the spillover of illegal arms coming in from neighbouring countries, making it increasingly difficult to curb the activities of armed bandits. It has also been reported that some of the combatants who fought alongside Muammar Gaddafi in Libya moved southward into the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin after his downfall, exacerbating the spread of armed banditry in these regions. The most recent empirical research, including (ICG, 2021), suggests that there is a fundamental shift in the nature and trends of armed banditry in Nigeria, with a clear increase in lethality and also in the number of reported violent events performed by these groups in the last two years.

Over time, there has been a fundamental shift in the modus operandi of the bandits in the level of atrocities committed by them and the rate of killings of the populace and ransom activities. For instance, in 2021 alone, there were over 1000 kidnappings for ransom issues as a result of armed bandits across North-west Nigeria, with increasing attacks on military bases, airports, moving trains, and local communities. Its dynamics have transformed north-west and north-central Nigeria into an enclave of disorder, creating severe security threats (Ojo et al., 2024).

According to the International Crisis Group (ICG), in 2021, the number of civilians murdered by firearms in north-west Nigeria alone from 2013 to 2021 exceeded 52,000, while a total of 105,000 guns were confiscated in this region within the specified time frame (ICG, 2021). Notwithstanding Nigeria's stringent weapons control legislation, the prevalence of illicit firearms has experienced a substantial rise. Gun violence has surpassed all other causes of death for the first time in recorded history, resulting in a decrease in the average lifespan of the inhabitants in the region. This shift has been most tangible in the central states of Zamfara, Kebbi, and, to a certain extent, Sokoto. These largely rural and underdeveloped states have experienced numerous incidents of mass abductions for ransom, herder-farming community clashes, and attacks on local settlements by armed bandits. It is critical that the Nigerian government takes immediate measures to disrupt and neutralise the activities of these increasingly bold and elusive armed bandit groups before they further entrench themselves and potentially merge with larger insurgent groups such as Boko Haram in the future.

4.2 Typologies of armed banditry

Responses gathered from the interviews on the field revealed that nomadic Fulani herdsmen, political militias turned bandits, and local criminal gangs have become the major typologies of armed bandits in Northern Nigeria. The Hausa-Fulani, the largest ethnic group in Nigeria, which is predominantly found in the North, have a significant number of members engaged in herding activities. One of the respondents claimed that:

"The Fulani herdsmen have been involved in several clashes with local farmers over grazing rights and access to natural resources, resulting in the loss of lives and displacement of communities. However, in recent years, some Fulani herdsmen have become more organised in carrying out pre-meditated attacks on local villagers and, in some cases, engaging in cattle rustling," IDI – male 44 years.

Researchers have noted that there are elements of politicisation and instrumentalisation of the Fulani ethnicity by the political elites in power, to the extent that the Fulani herdsmen are now perceived and categorised as the new face of terrorism in Nigeria (Muhammed et al., 2023; Gbadeyan and Osadola, 2023a). On the other hand, there were several State and non-state-sponsored militias created and armed to address

specific political or ethno-religious goals in Nigeria. The most notable of these militias is established in the Middle Belt, a region known for its ethno-religious conflicts and its strategic location between the predominantly Muslim North and the predominantly Christian South of Nigeria. In the voice of one of the participants,

"These political militias have now transformed into armed bandit groups, targeting local communities for financial gains and engaging in organised crimes such as cattle rustling and kidnapping for ransom. There were also local criminal gangs that have been identified to be involved in various forms of armed banditry in different states. For example, the "Yan Sa Kai" in Zamfara State originated as a vigilante group established to support the State in providing internal security," FGD – male 62 years.

However, due to the lack of a legal framework for such groups and the corruption within the security agencies, "Yan Sa Kai" has gradually mutated and turned into one of the most active and influential armed bandit groups in the State. These local criminal gangs are often formed by local youths who are disillusioned, disempowered and lack any sense of belonging or opportunities. It is widely argued that any sustainable solution to armed banditry in Northern Nigeria must tackle these underpinning factors that give rise to local criminality.

Similarly, the involvement of nomadic Fulani herdsmen in armed banditry in Northern Nigeria has recently attracted scholarly attention (Ojo, 2023; Gbadeyan, Ola, Osadola, and Ojo, 2024). The first aspect to understand is the notion of Fulani identity, which is complex and fluid. In modern Nigeria, the Fulani people are primarily known for their cattle rearing, and their presence on the roads and in the hinterland of northern Nigeria is widely acknowledged. This is often referred to as the 'cattle Fulani' image. But the Fulani people have more complex identity than just being cattle rearers. It is worth noting that there are divisions within the Fulani communities between those who identify themselves as indigenes and those who see themselves as settlers. Indigenes are traditionally regarded as the 'masters of the land', and they are dominantly engaged in farming. This has changed with the settlement of many Fulani people in localities and the development of a type of interaction between the Fulani cattle herders and local farmers. But there are widespread stereotypes and suspicion against the Fulani in Nigeria, which has sometimes led to negative stereotypes against them. Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria have been involved in conflicts with host communities and neighbouring ethnic groups, especially in the Middle Belt and the North-west geopolitical zones.

Osadola and Gbadeyan (2023) argued that the reasons for these conflicts are much more complicated than simply racial or ethnic clashes. The historical "identity" related explanation for the Fulani's involvement in banditry appears to be falling out of favour in the academic circle. Most experts argue that the struggle for resources such as land and water between cattle herdsmen and local farmers is the root cause of Fulani

rampaging, particularly in the Middle Belt. However, it is hard to draw a direct line between those conflicts and the spate of deadly attacks carried out by the Fulani herdsmen against rural villagers. The changing patterns of violence by the nomadic Fulani herdsmen have become an increasing worry for both the Nigerian government and the international community. And now, there is a shift from reliance on a type of "essentialist" argument based on historical Fulani identity to a more dynamic argument that focuses on contemporary socio-economic and political dynamics in explaining the crime pattern linked to the Fulani herdsmen. According to Adenuga et al. (2023), the pastoral Fulani people and their affiliated groups and militias were reportedly implicated in 70% of all documented instances of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria from 1999 to 2021.

Furthermore, political militias have also evolved into banditry, which has led to the cycle of mobilisations, political violence, and the empowerment of partisan elements that sustained the societal division in Nigeria. In reality, a multitude of social orders existed when Nigeria's political parties were under colonial influence. This left Nigeria with a legacy of divisions in faith, regionalism, and ethnicity. Political elites in Nigeria understood this social condition and have continuously mobilised to resolve those divisions. They anchor and expand their own interests through engaging, controlling, and manipulating these divisions into factional adoption.

In principle, under the current regime in Nigeria, the State has significant control over the legal use of violence, such as the defence and the police. There exist pre-formed societal structures in our world, regardless of the specific type we are discussing. This is due to the innate human aversion to living in uncertainty. People have always naturally preferred living in an organised and well-defined society. This need for structure in human conditions explains the social order, be it democratic or autocratic.

Lastly, in recent years, "local criminal gangs" have become the most prevalent type of armed banditry in Northwestern Nigeria. The emergence of local criminal gangs can be traced to the breakdown of law and order from the 1990s due to the disbandment of a government-organised vigilante group called "Yan Sa Kai" by the northern administration. The Yan Sakai's excessive actions eroded its credibility, especially among the Fulani ethnic group who were deeply affected by the Yan Sakai's presence. As a result, there was an escalation of violent conflict between the Hausas and the Fulanis in the North West region. The Fulanis formed an armed militia group called Yan Bindiga in retaliation to the actions of the Yan Sakai. The successful expansion of local criminal gangs is a clear testament to the inefficiency and biased political agendas of the rural administrative mandates. This notable success has sent ripples of fear among the "civilised" political circles; in the past two years, not only the amount of open violence under the name of the gangs has escalated, but also reports of violent confrontations between local gangs and the federal forces are becoming more and more common, giving rise to a more and more self-justified security restraint and the inception of a militarised police state.

4.3 Trajectories and tactics of armed bandits in Northwestern Nigeria

Armed banditry in the north-west region of Nigeria, specifically in Zamfara state, is characterised by attacks against rural communities and transportation, cattle rustling, illegal artisanal gold mines, conflicts between farmers and herders, kidnapping, and other forms of violence demanding a ransom. The modus operandi of bandits has transformed significantly in recent years, while their movements have remained relatively sporadic and fluid. Unlike insurgent groups like Boko Haram, armed bandits do not seem to hold particular territories or directly confront the Nigerian State or security forces. Instead, they have been continuously adapting to the context in which they operate. For example, interviews conducted with key informants suggested that bandits in Zamfara state have been dispersing into smaller groups and have become more exploratory in their movements. On the other hand, the knowledge gained from decades-long operations in places like Birnin Gwari has given certain bandit groups the confidence to engage in more coordinated and brazen attacks, such as kidnapping travellers or raiding small rural settlements from multiple directions at once.

It is worth noting that the repeated attack or use of a particular tactic in an area has the propensity to create levels of almost absolute fear and vulnerability amongst local populations, which inevitably makes the recovery of that area particularly challenging. Also, such methods have the potential to provoke and escalate intercommunal violence over time. The interviews and fieldwork observations reiterated that banditry, as it operates today, may not be a cohesive social or political movement per se. However, there currently exist multiple, localised and small-scale civil conflicts and contestations over resources, criminal economies, and power between communities that are often used and instrumentalised by bandits.

The geographic spread of armed banditry in northern Nigeria has shifted dramatically within the past decade. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, banditry was concentrated in the north-west region of the country, particularly Katsina and Sokoto states. However, recent evidence suggests a westward migration of armed banditry, with Zamfara state emerging as the new epicentre of violence and criminality. Ojo et al. (2023) argued that the Northern region experienced not less than 909 instances of armed bandit attacks, resulting in the deaths of over 8300 individuals from January 2013 to March 2022. While Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto, and Zamfara are the northern states that have been highly impacted the most, in Kaduna State, armed bandits are directly responsible for the death of 1917 individuals through 342 attacks. Similarly, in Katsina State, there were 208 attacks resulting in the loss of 1416 lives. Sokoto State had 54 attacks and 644 fatalities, while Zamfara experienced 275 attacks with 4114 casualties. Furthermore, armed banditry in the north-west has resulted in the abduction of numerous individuals and the displacement of hundreds of thousands, as reported by Ojo (2023).

This change in hotspots mirrors longstanding patterns of "push-and-pull" factors for banditry, where security vacuums, weakened local governance, and resource

competition, such as land disputes or cattle rustling, drive bandits out of one area and attract them to another. One of the interviewed respondents, being a stakeholder in the security sector, claimed that:

"The establishment of 'firebases' by security forces in Katsina and Zamfara has also influenced the geographic spread of armed banditry. Such military encampments, which are intended to disrupt armed group movements, have effectively displaced banditry from traditional territories in Katsina and pushed activities further south and west," IDI – male 49 years (Security Personnel).

The importance of firebases in driving bandit displacement was reflected in a recent response strategy by the Zamfara state government, which made clear that proximity to firebases was one of the main criteria for siting new police divisions. Overall, the geographic spread is driven by the shifting dynamics of opportunity structures for bandits and the efforts of security forces to disrupt established territories.

On the modus operandi and tactics adopted by the bandits in Zamfara, findings from the FGDs revealed that bandits mostly frequently employ the 'hit-and-run' approach, a proven tactic originally used by guerrilla warfare and counter-insurgency groups around the world. The tactic enables the groups to sustain pressure on the government and army by constantly attacking them in specific, methodical ways, making it a challenging problem for the State to effectively respond to the multifaceted dynamics associated with armed banditry. The bandits typically select trails of 'soft targets' such as villagers, motorists, security patrols, local defence operatives, and moving trains to perpetrate their attacks against. These targets are generally considered as easy goals to attack and disembark without any immediate and strong riposte from the taken-aback security quarters. The villagers, for example, are often intentionally targeted by the bandits, as they are located in rural settings that are usually characterised by a lack of close security backups or rapid response mechanisms from state security operatives. It is significant to note that the choice of victims usually differs with respect to regions and the type of armed banditry involved, as nomadic Fulani herdsmen are known to target and attack farming communities as a result of resource conflict and schism.

Last but by no means least, another feature of the tactics seen in armed banditry is the desire to loot and pillage. The interviews and narrative accounts revealed during in-depth interviews have consistently outlined how the bandits' assault commenced and climaxed into mass loot and devastation of victims' properties, cattle, foodstuffs and farm produce. Such rampant and brigandish actions, as evidenced in the course of each attack, which are conspicuously material-focused, have proven influential in shaping decision-making in tactics. Since the groups have adapted and personalised their approaches to align with the desired effects of undermining the State's capacity and governance, these actions have been particularly effective.

The targets for armed banditry within Nigeria typically include civilians, especially in rural areas, wealthy individuals, and critical infrastructure, including transportation, communication and energy assets. Western hostages have also been taken, indicating an increasing threat to international interests by the group. The motives behind such behaviour include spreading fear and gaining widespread attention through the media, but these are primarily driven by financial or material considerations. In the north-west of Nigeria, bandits continue to constitute a diverse range of economically motivated, non-ideological organised criminal group gangs engaged in widespread livestock theft, rape, extortion, kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, plunder, and harassment of road users.

In recent years, there has been a growing trend of armed bandits specifically targeting and robbing artisanal gold miners, particularly in the State of Zamfara. This State has had a significant increase in artisanal gold output, resulting in scattered discoveries around the region. Since about 2009, a significant increase in the worldwide value of gold has attracted numerous young men to engage in gold mining. These individuals have predominantly grown up in various places, Anka, Bin Yauri, Maru, Malale, Gurmana, and Okolom-Dogondaji (ICG, 2020).

Interviews conducted during the fieldwork revealed that bandits have become attracted to the strong financial incentives associated with kidnapping operations, which can act as a rapid and effective means of gaining substantial funds for the purchase of arms, ammunition and consolidating power. It is also likely that these groups are motivated by a desire to benefit from a lack of effective protection of mining sites and the potential loot that is available. However, these explanations are likely to be more applicable to the actions of well-organised and criminalised armed groups, such as MEND, than to the opportunistic actions of other "professional" criminals. Groups such as MEND and other separatist movements in the Niger Delta region and Nigeria itself have managed not only to secure their primary objectives, such as the acquisition of substantial funds through illegal activities, but also have been able to generate widespread attention and discontent. This has been achieved through media-friendly activities such as political strikes and a sustained campaign of crime against the oil and gas infrastructure in the region. This has caused significant economic hardship and the loss of millions of barrels of oil to the international market. While the clear motives for groups such as MEND may appear politically oriented, it is important to remember that their actions have significant commercial implications both domestically and internationally.

4.4 Dissecting state responses to armed banditry in Northwestern Nigeria

A multi-faceted approach is employed to assess the current State's responses to armed banditry in Northern Nigeria. Government reactions to the escalating violence carried out by bandits and other criminal factions in Nigeria's north-west have primarily alternated between kinetic and non-kinetic approaches. Although the federal government

has primarily utilised military strategies, the state governments, lacking direct control over the armed forces due to federal control over security agencies, have endeavoured to negotiate peace agreements with the bandits and other criminal organisations. The discrepancy in strategy adequately reflects the disagreement between the federal and State governments in their efforts to address banditry. The lack of harmony between these two tiers of government in combating banditry is shown by the fact that the former Governor of Zamfara State, Abdulaziz Yari Abubakar, expressed his anger by publicly renouncing his constitutional duty as the State's main security officer.

Historically, successive Nigerian governments' strategies for dealing with armed banditry have fluctuated between periods of direct military intervention and attempts at finding political solutions to what is, at root, a social and economic issue. However, as we identify in the next paragraph, the ascendancy of armed banditry as a critical security issue within Nigeria's national and international security agenda has been accompanied by a sea change wherein the Nigerian State has abandoned efforts to address armed banditry through non-militarist strategies in favour of a preoccupation with counter-insurgency and military solutions to the problem. Most significantly, in response to both the Katsina protest movement to re-brand armed banditry as 'terrorism' and recent attacks on prominent political and religious leaders in the Northern states, Nigerian President, Buhari, had progressively depicted armed bandits as constituting a national security risk to the State rather than framing them as common criminals against whom law enforcement strategies can be engaged in isolation from the transnational flows of arms, people and finance that fuel the banditry itself. Prior to his election in 2015, Buhari and his political party had been accused of adopting strategies of appeasement to armed banditry directed by powerful figures in the North West and North East with regard to the mobilisation of political violence and the rigging of elections.

These military interventions and response efforts aim to contain and degrade the armed groups, diminish their capabilities and strengths, and disrupt and dismantle their operational networks. It is suggested that Nigeria's counterterrorist military operations have been heavily influenced by external sovereignty and national security agendas. For example, the US government has been extensively training and assisting the Nigerian military, probably serving its own geopolitical or security interests to tackle the spread of terrorism and quell any instability in the oil-rich Sub-Saharan Sahel region (Onuoha 2016). On the one hand, this type of counter-insurgency approach demonstrates relative successes in influencing the locals and isolating the operational capacities of armed bandit groups in the North and Northwestern States. Yet, data shows that properly calibrated and well-directed military engagements may serve as a conducive resource in disrupting the organisational capacities of armed banditry. The Military activities have undeniably had an impact and yielded results, as the military and police have apprehended numerous individuals believed to be affiliated with herder-aligned paramilitary organisations and criminal syndicates (CDD, 2015). Additionally, a significant number of these individuals

have been neutralised, several forest encampments have been dismantled, and substantial quantities of weapons and ammunition have been seized. Furthermore, the military and police have successfully liberated numerous individuals who were previously abducted. Despite these achievements, security agencies have been unable to dismantle a diverse array of armed bandits. Despite intensified efforts, the current resources, including personnel, logistics, and equipment, are inadequate to respond promptly to armed group attacks.

Governors of states in the North-west have also risen to find a solution to the ravaging bandits. For instance, in 2019, the armed bandits and the Governors of Zamfara, Sokoto, and Katsina came to a mutual understanding. The agreement encompassed the process of disarmament, the liberation of kidnapped individuals, and the granting of pardons to bandits. Although there was a decrease in the number of deaths from August to November due to efforts to reconcile, a resurgence of attacks occurred in 2020 (Dami, 2021). Despite official denials, both the Nigerian federal and State governments have regularly resorted to paying ransom in order to ensure the survival of victims and secure their release (Mustapha, 2019). Due to the regular payment of ransom by Nigerian authorities to preserve the lives of victims and secure their freedom, mass kidnappings have emerged as a significant means of generating funds for criminal and extremist groups (Lamidi, 2024). However, this practice also serves as a motivation for bandits to persist in their illegal activities.

In Zamfara state, a peace process led by the government successfully reached an agreement with armed groups in October 2016. As a result, an arms-for-development deal was established. In April 2017, the police reported that more than 1000 armed fighters and criminals who were allied with herders had renounced banditry and handed over their weapons in exchange for monetary commitments. This case serves as a notable illustration of concession and policy interventions implemented at the subnational level. The effort in Katsina state led to the confiscation of 107 AK-47 rifles, 361 Dane guns, and 28,000 stolen animals, all of which were sold for money. In Kaduna state, a campaign spearheaded by the then Police Commissioner, Austin Iwar, successfully persuaded approximately 1150 members of armed organisations to voluntarily relinquish their firearms and other weapons (Lamidi, 2024). As a condition for amnesty, the men made a solemn oath on the Quran and the Bible to cease their activities as bandits and criminals. Although these accords initially brought a period of calm, they eventually fell apart after about a year, leading to an escalation in attacks by the predominantly herder-aligned armed groups.

Other community-based approaches have been encouraged and adopted. The federal government and security forces promoted the establishment of self-defence militias, known as "vigilante groups" or the "Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)," in local communities. In 2018, the Zamfara state government established the CJTF with approximately 8,500 young men and women (Mustapha, 2019). These vigilante groups

worked with the military and other security forces to gather intelligence, conduct patrols, and provide local security. However, their functions and behaviours have been controversial. There are concerns from human rights organisations about alleged extrajudicial killings, ill-treatment of arrestees, and abuses of civil liberties. Besides, political manipulation and power struggles have been observed in some vigilantism practices. As positivist scholars pointed out, militarising local communities and placing the monopoly of violence into the hands of these self-defence groups would only lead to further insecurity and violence. It is noteworthy that there are calls for more comprehensive socio-economic and political initiatives to address the governance and development challenges in rural areas where armed banditry is most rampant. However, the success of such community-based initiatives is heavily dependent on the workings of a clientelist system, in which political elites would often co-opt or even establish groups to advance their own interests. Such issues are deeply rooted in local power dynamics and state-society relationships in Northern Nigeria. On the other hand, dialogue and conflict resolution mechanisms play a vital role in the secondary prevention of mass atrocities and armed conflicts in the North.

As an economic response to curbing the menace of armed banditry, in 2019, the Zamfara state government allocated about 8.6 billion naira (equivalent to around \$23.6 million) to build three rural grazing areas, with one designated for Fulani pastoralists in each of the three senatorial zones (Lamidi, 2024). Additionally, due to the gradual expansion of farmland into grazing areas and livestock routes, there has been a significant increase in conflicts with pastoralists. As a result, the government has decided to revoke all titles and farmland allocations that have been granted since 1999, with a commitment to conducting a thorough examination. The Zamfara government has also implemented a social intervention strategy known as the Zamfara State Social Intervention Programme. This initiative aims to support and offer other means of livelihood to herder-allied organisations, vigilantes, and other armed individuals who are willing to surrender their weapons. The recipients of this effort, aimed at about 18,000 young individuals, received instruction in a diverse range of skills that will equip them for gainful employment or enable them to become self-reliant entrepreneurs. The inaugural phase commenced in November 2019 with a total of 8600 individuals enlisted, as reported by Altine (2020) and Shinka (2020).

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigeria has experienced a complex national crisis with significant geographical consequences as a result of armed banditry and other sources of insecurity. This study situated armed banditry not only as a source of violence itself but also as a means through which violent conflicts are being reconstituted in the changing landscape of northern Nigeria. We found that different forms of violence now intersect in diverse ways with armed banditry, and this has significant implications for understanding the spectrums and

trajectories of violent conflicts in the region. The current government's counter-banditry programme, which employs military reconnaissance and raids, is commendable. Unfortunately, the expected relief has not been achieved because of operational challenges resulting from a lack of competence in the topography of the region. This highlights the importance of local vigilantes and community watch organisations, which possess a superior understanding of the area. Individuals within these systems, nonetheless, must receive proper instruction, be provided with necessary tools, and be closely supervised to prevent hazardous extremes and improper utilisation. The establishment of community-based law enforcement, supported by local staff and information, is thus the most viable path forward. Hence, to find a lasting solution to curb the ravaging armed banditry in the north-west, the following recommendations must be attempted:

1. The importance of moving beyond purely state-centric responses and understanding banditry as a localised, albeit multi-scalar, security concern, the role of the co-option of state security resources in cases of well-armed and well-connected banditry, and the impact of climate change, particularly on rural economies and livelihoods, in the evolution and reinforcement of banditry. Instead, there should be effective community-based initiatives and dialogues that tackle the longstanding marginalisation and exclusion of many of the populations that have become fertile recruiting grounds for armed bandit groups.
2. Moreover, gun trafficking plays a crucial role in exacerbating the bloodshed caused by armed bandits in northern Nigeria. Ensuring security in the problematic region and beyond requires the essential monitoring of border communities involved in the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALWs). Simultaneously, the government should actively include individuals in the process of reorienting their values to cultivate ethical ideals and a deep respect for life and human rights.
3. Given the complex, multidimensional nature of banditry in Northern Nigeria, any effort to address the phenomenon should recognise the need for holistic and comprehensive socio-economic measures rather than a heavier emphasis on military solutions.

REFERENCES:

1. ABDULRASHEED, A. (2021): Counter-Terrorism Activities and Human Rights Violation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Gap and Lesson. In: *Lapai International Journal of Administration*, 2021, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp 2-36. <http://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3881649>
2. ACAPS. (2020): *Nigeria: Banditry violence and displacement in the north-west*. [Online.] In: ACAPS, 2020. [Cited 12.6.2025.] Available online:

- <<https://www.acaps.org/en/countries/archives/detail/nigeria-banditry-violence-and-displacement-in-the-northwest>>.
3. ADELEYE, O. A. – OSADOLA, O. S. (2022): International Aid in Managing IDPs: The Case of United Nations in Nigeria. In: *SIASAT Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Studies*, 2022, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 235-246. <https://doi.org/10.33258/siasat.v7i3.127>
 4. ADENUGA, G. – OLAJUBU, A. O. – OYEWOLE, S. – OMOTOLA, J. S. (2023): Ethno-religious Conflicts and the Challenges of National Security in Nigeria. In: *South African Review of Sociology*, 2023. Vol. 53, No. 2. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21528586.2023.2233462>
 5. ADU, F. M. – OSADOLA, O. S. (2022): Geo-Strategic Analysis of Identity Politics and Ethnic Separatism: A Re-Evaluation of Nigeria's Good Neighbourliness Political Framework In The Face Of Terrorism. In: *American Journal of International Relations*, 2022, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.47672/ajir.939>
 6. AZEEZ, G. (2020): Niger as a transit country for Nigerian and other West African migrants. [Online.] In: *American University in Cairo*, 2020. [Cited 15.3.2019.] Available online: <<https://fount.aucegypt.edu/etds/1483>>.
 7. CENTRE FOR DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT. (2015): Policy brief: Addressing Rural Banditry in Northern Nigeria. [Online.] In: *Centre for Democracy and Development*, 2015. [Cited 12.6.2025.] Available online: <<https://www.cddwestafrica.org/reports/addressing-rural-banditry-in-northern-nigeria/>>.
 8. DAMI, C. D. (2021): Impact of Terrorism, Banditry and Kidnapping on Human Security in Nigeria. In: *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2021, Vol. 6, No. 8, pp. 299-305. <https://doi.org/10.36348/sjhss.2021.v06i08.006>
 9. GBADEYAN, O. – OSADOLA, O. (2023b): Small Arms Proliferation and Its Security Implications in Jos North Local Government, Nigeria. In: *SIASAT*, 2023, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 221-227. <https://doi.org/10.33258/siasat.v8i4.165>
 10. GBADEYAN, O. J. – OLA, A. A. – OSADOLA, O. S. – OJO, O. M. (2024). Strengthening Women Engagement in Post-Conflict Peace-building in North-East Nigeria: An interrogation of the UN Resolution 1325. In: *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 2024, Vol. 11, No. 1. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2286067>
 11. GBADEYAN, O. J. – OSADOLA, O. S. (2023a): Healing the Wounds of Insurgency in the North East: Reflections on the Critical Roles of Women in Mediation and Peace-building. In: *Gender and Behaviour*, 2023, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 21746-21755.
 12. GLOBAL TERRORISM INDEX. (GTI): (2015, 2017, 2018): Measuring and understanding the impact of terrorism. [Online.] In: *Institute for Economics and*

- Peace*, 2018. [Cited 12.6.2025.] Available online: <<https://www.economicsandpeace.org/reports/>>.
13. GOODLUCK JONATHAN FOUNDATION. (2021): Terrorism and Banditry in Nigeria: The Nexus: Kaduna, Katsina, Niger and Zamfara States Context. [Online.] In: *Goodluck Jonathan Foundation*, 2021. [Cited 12.6.2025.] Available online: <<https://read-me.org/more-terrorism/2024/5/17/terrorism-and-banditry-in-nigeria-the-nexus-kaduna-katsina-niger-and-zamfara-states-context>>.
 14. ICG. (2021): Halting the Deepening Turmoil in Nigeria's North West. [Online]. In: *International Crisis Group*, 2021. [Cited 21.9.25.]. Available online: <<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/nigeria/halting-deepening-turmoil-nigerias-north-west>>.
 15. ICG. (2021): Violence in Nigeria's north west: Rolling back the mayhem. [Online]. In: *International Crisis Group*, 2021. [Cited 21.9.25.]. Available online: <<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/288-violence-nigerias-north-west-rolling-back-mayhem>>.
 16. LAMIDI, K. O. (2024): Nigerian State and the War Against Armed Banditry. In: OJO, J. S. – AINA, F. – OYEWOLE, S. (Ed.): *Armed Banditry in Nigeria: Evolution, Dynamics, and Trajectories*. Cham: Springer Nature, 2024, pp. 221-250. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-45445-5>
 17. MAIANGWA, B. (2018): The 'Jihadism' of Boko Haram In Nigeria: The 'Glocal' dimension. In: BABALOLA, D. – ONAPAJO, H. (Ed.): *Nigeria, a Country Under Siege: Issues of Conflict and Its Management*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2018, pp 92-112. ISBN 978-1-5275-0543-8.
 18. MUHAMMED, A. Y. – ADISA, W. B. – AYODELE, J. – GBADEYAN, O. J. – GARBA, E. (2024): State Responses to Herder–Farmers Conflict and Peace-Building in Rural Grazing Areas of Nigeria. In: *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, 2024, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 128-146. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-02-2023-0775>
 19. MUSTAPHA, U. N. (2019): Armed banditry and internal security in Zamfara state. In: *International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research*, 2019, Vol. 10, No. 8, pp. 1219-1226.
 20. OBI, K.C. – IWUOHA, V.C. (2023): Untold Story of the Expanding Armed Banditry in Nigeria's North-west: Linking the Communal-Level Collaborators. In: *Third World Quarterly*, 2023, Vol. 44, No. 7, pp. 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2023.2192400>
 21. OCHU, C. T. – OSADOLA, O. S. – FADEYI, T. E. – GBADEYAN, O. J. (2023): Mortality And Fertility In Sub-Sahara Africa: Investigating The Precautionary Measures In Nigeria, 1960s – 1990s. In: *Journal of Namibian Studies: History Politics Culture*, 2023, Vol. 34, pp. 1046-1063. <https://doi.org/10.59670/jns.v34i.2346>

22. ODENIYI, S. (2024): Banditry: Military refutes Zamfara gov's laxity allegation. [Online]. In: *The Punch*, 2024, [Cited 25.6.24.] Available online: <<https://punchng.com/banditry-military-refutes>>.
23. OJEWALE, O. – OSASONA, T. – SHAMSUDEEN, Y. (2024): Climate Change and Armed Banditry in North-west Nigeria: A Trouble Synergy of Insecurity. In: OJO, J. S. – AINA, F. – OYEWOLE, S. (Ed.): *Armed Banditry in Nigeria: Evolution, Dynamics, and Trajectories*. Cham: Springer Nature, 2024, pp. 221-250. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-45445-5>
24. OJEWALE, O. (2021): *Rising Insecurity in North-west Nigeria: Terrorism Thinly Disguised as Banditry*. [Online.] In: *Brookings*, 2021 [Cited 21.12.2025.] Available online: <<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/rising-insecurity-in-northwest-nigeria-terrorism-thinly-disguised-as-banditry>>.
25. OJEWALE, O. (2023): Theorising and Illustrating Plural Policing Models in Countering Armed Banditry as Hybrid Terrorism in North-west Nigeria. In: *Cogent Social Sciences*, 2021, Vol. 9, No. 1. <https://doi/full/10.1080/23311886.2023.2174486>
26. OJO, J. S. – AINA, F. – OYEWOLE, S. (2024): Conclusion: Making Credible Governance the Epicentre of Counter-Banditry. In: OJO, J. S. – AINA, F. – OYEWOLE, S. (Ed.): *Armed Banditry in Nigeria: Evolution, Dynamics, and Trajectories*. Cham: Springer Nature, 2024, pp. 221-250. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-45445-5>
27. OJO, J. S. – OYEWOLE, S. – AINA, F. (2023): Forces of terror: Armed banditry and insecurity in North-west Nigeria. In: *Democracy and Security*, 2023, Vol. 19, No. 4, pp. 319-346. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17419166.2023.2164924>
28. OJO, J. S. (2020): Governing “ungoverned spaces” in the foliage of conspiracy: Toward (re)ordering terrorism, from Boko Haram insurgency, Fulani militancy to banditry in northern Nigeria. In: *African Security*, 2020, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 77-110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2020.1731109>
29. OJO, J. S. (2023): Climate-related armed conflict and communities' resistance to rural grazing area settlement policy in Nigeria's Middlebelt. In: *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 2023, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 121-141. <https://doi.org/10.1002/crq.21390>
30. ONUOHA, F. C. (2016): Split in ISIS-aligned Boko Haram group. [Online]. In: *Al Jazeera Centre for Studies*, 2016. [Cited 20.9.25.] Available online: <<https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2016/10/split-isis-aligned-boko-haram-group-161027113247008.html>>.
31. OSADOLA, O. S. – EMAH, G. S. (2022): Terrorism in Nigeria and Her Neighbours. In: *Konfrontasi: Jurnal Kultural, Ekonomi Dan Perubahan Sosial*, 2022, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 439-448. <https://doi.org/10.33258/konfrontasi2.v9i3.237>

32. OSASONA, T. (2023): The Question of Definition: Armed banditry in Nigeria's North-west in the Context of International Humanitarian *International Law*. In: *Review of the Red Cross*, 2023, Vol. 105, No. 923, 735-749. <https://doi:10.1017/S1816383122000455>
33. OYEWOLE, S. – AINA, F. – OJO, J. S. (2022): Wings over flies: Air campaigns against armed banditry in North-west Nigeria. In: *RUSI Journal*, 2022, Vol. 167, No. 4-5, pp. 92-103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2022.2153076>
34. RUFAl, M. (2021): I am a bandit: A decade of research in Zamfara State. [Online]. In: *FUDECO*, 2021. [Cited 20.9.25.] Available online: <<https://fudeco-ngo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/I-Am-A-Bandit-A-decade-of-Research-in-Zamfara-State.pdf>>.