



Impact of Rural Banditry on Human Security in Northern Nigeria

*¹Ibrahim Kawuley Mikail, ²Muhammad Ayuba, ¹Kabiru Zubairu and ¹Adamu Bala



¹Department of International Relations, Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna.

²Department of Political Science, Kaduna State University.

*Corresponding Author's email: elkawuley75@gmail.com Phone: +2348039683006

KEYWORDS

Rural Banditry,
Cattle Rustling,
Human Security,
Development.

ABSTRACT

The paper employed content analysis from qualitative sources of data. the analysis indicated that, unemployment having the highest percentage of (44%) is identified as the most significant driver of rural banditry, implying economic hardship and lack of livelihood options are major catalysts, while ethno-religious conflict conflicts have (23%) which also plays a large role, reflecting the tension and violence stemming from identity-based divisions. In another vein, greed has been regarded as another causes of rural banditry which indicates (18%), suggest that some individuals engage in banditry primarily for financial gain, independence of social or economic pressures. Robbery and insecurity each having (5.9%), this highlights the opportunistic and lawlessness environment that enables banditry. The article founds that, the impact of rural banditry on human security that led to cattle rustling and armed banditry in northern Nigeria, as well as to analyze the nature and dynamics of the phenomena and how that has further affected the relationship of the duo inclusive the downstream economy. The paper recommends that, there is a need of the development of grassroots policing, community policing enriched by local personnel and intelligence in order to protect the lives and properties of the rural dwellers. The way forward, then, is the development of grassroots policing or Community Policing, enriched by local personnel and intelligence to collaborate with security personnel in order to tame the menace of insecurity at the community level.

CITATION

Mikail, I. K., Ayuba, M., Zubairu, K., & Bala, A. (2025). Impact of Rural Banditry on Human Security in Northern Nigeria. *FUDMA Journal of Humanities, Social Science and Creative Arts*, 1(AHBSI), 69-79. [https://doi.org/10.70882/fujohssaca.2025.v1\(AHBSI\).9](https://doi.org/10.70882/fujohssaca.2025.v1(AHBSI).9)

INTRODUCTION

Banditry means occurrence or prevalence of armed robbery or violent crime. It involves the use of force, or threat to that effect to intimidate a person with the intent to robbed, rape or kill. Banditry is a crime against persons. It has been a common genre of crime, as well as cause violence in contemporary societies, (Nigeria Watch, 2011). This trend has motivated most of our criminals to engage themselves in either banditry or kidnapping business within the context of black economy or illegal means of survival.

Rural banditry associated with cattle rustling has become a major concern for public policy makers in contemporary Nigeria. It refers to the practice of stealing cattle and other livestock animals from herders, or the raiding of cattle from the ranches. Although driven by deferent needs and factors, it is increasingly an economically-based form of criminality perpetuated by informal networks (Kwaja, 2013). Rural banditry thrives as a means of 'primitive' accumulation of cowherds in the context of subsistence and commercial pastoralist. The most disturbing impact of this banditry is the unsettling of pastoralist transhumant

activities. Furthermore, rural banditry is accompanied by rape, kidnapping, organized attacks on villages and communities, and looting.

Rural banditry also refers to armed violence driven principally by the criminal intent to steal and plunder. It is motivated by the quest for economic accumulation. The victims are vulnerable individuals and communities with material valuables. The most common examples of rural banditry in Nigeria are armed robbery, cattle rustling and village raids. Banditry is on the increase in northern region. The northern region characterized with many security problems; chief among them is Boko Haram insurgency in the north east. While in the north-central region, herdsmen militancy has become a key security concern. Northwest Nigeria, which used to be the bastion of security and stability, has been hit with rural banditry, cattle rustling and kidnapping business. Rural banditry in the northwest states especially Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara has reached alarming rate in recent years. Bandits terrorize villages with impunity. They actually settled in Zamfara state and some parts of Kaduna state and its neighboring states of Niger and Kogi in North central zone, setting up fortified enclaves in the hinterland and on the frontiers, from where they plot and carry out their operation.

The phenomenon of rural banditry, which recently generates momentum in Nigeria's public discourse, is fallout of persistent violence in rural communities within the last ten years. The results had been traumatic. There had been massive loss of thousands of lives, forced displacement of locals and devastation of monumental proportions in States like Benue, Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara, Plateau, Niger, Nasarawa, Taraba, Yobe Gombe and others across Northern Nigeria. Although rural banditry is also reflected in criminal escapades like cattle rustling, kidnapping, armed robbery, drug abuse, arson, rape and other forms of violence, the brazen and gruesome massacre of agrarian communities with sophisticated weapons by suspected herdsmen and reprisal attacks from surviving victims threw it up to the front burner of national security. Pastoral Resolve (2016) notes that there is a symbiotic relationship between the two productions systems agricultural and pastoral, but conflicts had arisen because of their reliance on land and its related resources. Thus, the declining capacity of the state to moderate these conflicts and undertake effective policing of rural areas led to unending cycle of violence. The attendant resort to self-help worsened the security gaps in rural communities.

But, in recent times, banditry has emerged as another important problem. Cattle rustling involve the use of arms to steal households' entire livestock possession, thereby threatening the very existence of the affected households and communities. Conflicts and banditry are closely inter-linked as they are all forms of social insecurity, characterised by weaknesses in the institutional capacity

of the State to address the problems of insecurity, joblessness and acute poverty. While conflicts could trigger and cause cattle rustling, incidences of cattle rustling could also trigger and cause violent conflicts between pastoral and farming communities.

Meanwhile, the human security entails how an aspect of human lives will be protected which mainly includes personal security, community security, political security, food security, health security, educational security and environmental security (UNDP, 1994). In other word, the human security is provided by two main aspects: "safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and repression," and "protection from sudden and hurtful disruption in the patterns of daily life." According to former US Secretary of State reporting to his government on the results of Conference in San Francisco in 1945 that, they have set up the United Nations to guarantee two freedoms, "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want," were recognized at the founding pillars of the UN. The Report deplores, however, that the concept of security has been linked only to "freedom from fear (UNDP, 1994). Indeed, it is mandatory for the government to ensure effective human security to its citizens via providing security and law enforcement agencies like Police, Civil Defense, intelligence personnel as well as to provide military personnel for defending the nation against external invasion.

This article is an attempt to ascertain the impact of rural banditry on human security with special references to the rural dwellers in northern region. It would trace the root causes of the problem, nature of banditry in the region and its impact to the rural areas as well as to come up with the way forward as possible recommendations therein.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The content qualitative research method of the social sciences was duly employed; this method includes gathering data from previous literature sources such as relevant text books, journal articles, conference papers, internet resources and other source that form of scholarly works on the subject matter has been used in this study. The techniques for analyzing these secondary data are textual analysis and explanatory method. Textual analysis implies analyzing the content of books, journal articles, monographs, unpublished theses and internet materials. Explanatory method implies interpretation of existing texts on a subject matter. It means drawing inferences, premises, conclusions and implications from a scholar's work. This explanatory method is germane to the study of rural banditry given the importance of interpretation to this work.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Cattle Rustling and Banditry

The acts of cattle rustling and armed banditry are interwoven in most pastoral communities of Africa. Only on few occasions rustling could take place without involving banditry. This does not dispute the fact that there have been instances where cattle were quietly stolen in the night or even in the broad day light (Okoli, 2016, p.8). In fact, East Africa has high rate of cattle rustling in Africa, drew in the light of this, a protocol of Eastern African Police Chiefs Cooperation (EAPCCO) which legally defined cattle rustling as “the stealing or planning, organizing attempting, aiding or abetting the stealing of livestock by any person from one country or community to another, where the theft is accompanied by dangerous weapons and violence” (EAPCCO, 2008:8). Incidentally, there were a lot of factors that influenced the prevalence of cross- border cattle rustling in West Africa, which include the inability of most states to govern effectively its borderlands, hinterlands and forestlands (Mohammed, 2016, p.10).

While, banditry is the act of terrorism that characterized the bandits to attacks the people at individual or community level to kills, rape and steal their properties at any given time. This trend is the order of the day in most of the areas in north western and north central region in Nigeria. Banditry is a form of intimidation and harassment by the bandits against innocent people in attacking them with weapons towards killing, raping, maiming, stealing and destroying their properties to the detrimental to the innocent people and for accumulation of resources to the bandits.

Human Security

The twin concepts of freedom from fear and freedom from want that remain central to human security discourse are at the basis of a schism within the academic and practitioner community when it comes to the analysis of threats to human security and policy prescription. Proponents of a “narrow” concept (a freedom from fear emphasis which underpins both the UN’s Responsibility to Protect approach and the Human Security Report Project’s Human Security Report) focus on violent threats to individuals, while recognizing that these threats are strongly associated with poverty, lack of state capacity and various forms of socioeconomic and political inequity. Proponents of the “broad” freedom from want concept of human security such as that articulated in the UNDP’s Human Development Report 1994, and the Commission on Human Security’s 2003 report, Human Security Now, argue that the threat agenda should be broadened to include hunger, disease and natural disasters because these kill far more people than war, genocide and terrorism combined. Nevertheless, all proponents of human security agree that its primary goal is the protection of individuals, and that a clear distinction is to be made

between human security and national security, although the two may be seen as complementary rather than contradictory. While national security focuses on the defense of the state from external attack, human security is about protecting individuals and communities from any form of threat to their well-being, or even their very existence. Although still relatively new, the term is now widely used to describe the complex of interrelated threats to individual human well-being associated with interstate war, civil war, genocide, ethnic cleansing, population displacement, natural disasters and pandemics. Some of the broadest interpretations include aspects of security related to food, health, the environment, communities, politics, and human rights. Unlike many other efforts to redefine security where political scientists played a major role, human security was the handiwork of a group of development economists, such as the late Pakistani economist Mahabub ul Haq, who conceptualized the UNDP’s Human Development Report (UNDP 1994)

‘Human security is not a concern with weapons. It is a concern with human dignity. In the last analysis, it is a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, an ethnic tension that did not explode, a dissident who was not silenced, a human spirit that was not crushed’. (Mahbub ul Haq 1995)

Literature Review

Rural banditry and other forms of conflict have recently come to constitute a subject of great concern in Nigeria. Studies and other media reports indicate that, in the first quarter of 2014 alone, more than 262 persons lost their lives in 15 separate attacks in Benue state; and subsequent sporadic clashes has continued. In one instance, bandits brazenly attacked the state Governors convoy. Similarly, 16 separate attacks were reported in plateau and Kaduna states in the same period. They led to the loss of 139 lives, with scores of people injured. Zamfara state seems to be the epicenter of rural banditry in northern region. In early April 2015, over 120 people were massacred in YAR GALADIMA village, Zamfara state, by bandits who have, for at least the ten years, been terrorizing rural communities, as well as highway commuters.

The situation in many parts of Nigeria resembles broader Sahel region governance voids. Ungoverned spaces provide a power vacuum, which is at times fill by religious extremist groups and/or criminal elements; they have taken over remote areas where state presence is reduced or non-existent (Aning, 2009). The point made by Mohammed Bello Tukur, Secretary of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), supports the thesis that weak state capacity to regulate and establish effective governance accounts for the high level of illegal activities perpetrated by criminal gangs and networks. With specific reference to the Birnin Gwari area of Kaduna

State where cattle rustling and related criminal activities have been concentrated, Tukur says, almost all the entire herds around that area have been stolen. In fact, that belt; the belt from Birnin Gwari, through Funtua, Faskari, parts of Zamfara going to Anchau that is like a no man's land, for cattle rustlers and bandits. Every cow there has been stolen including cows belonging to general and top civil servants; talk less of small herdsman whose names you don't hear (Tukur 2013, p.45).

They have been people on highway, rustling cattle, looting, laying siege on rural markets and killing innocent people. In June 2018, gunmen attacked and killed 48 people in KIZARA village of Tsafe Local Government Area of Zamfara state. The neighboring state of Sokoto, Kebbi and Kaduna have not been immune to these attacks either. For example, a March 2014 attack on Angwan Sakwai of Kaura LGA, Kaduna state led to the death of 57 people with several others injured. In the northeastern states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Bornu, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe, as well as in the remaining central states of Kogi, Kwara and Nasarawa, there have been regular reports of banditry and violence. Actually, in 2013, a local militia ambushed and killed 46 police officers in the village of Alakyo in Nasarawa state. Some other reports also indicate occurrences of such attacks in plateau, Benue, Niger and Abuja in the north central states, (Centre for Democracy and Development 2015, p.2).

Migration has historically taken place largely through two corridors: a northwest corridor running from Niger and Benin Republics through Sokoto, Zamfara, Bornu, Katsina, Niger and Kwara states, terminating in Southwestern Nigeria; a second runs from the North-east beginning from Niger, Chad and Cameroun Republics through Bornu, Yobe, Adamawa, Jigawa, Kano, Plateau and Nasarawa states, terminating in the Niger-Benue Basin. Given the demographic changes, desertification, loss of foliage, expanded food production, drying-up of water points, to mention but a few; the pressure on land and the use of land-related resources becomes a key conflict trigger, Mohammed and Ibrahim (2015; p.6).

With respect to the state, the effective control over rural areas is a serious cause for concern, and appears implicated in the recurrence of rural banditry and other forms of social conflicts. For all practical purposes, the state is nonetheless able to impose effective controlling urban areas, however tenuous it may be. Such a policy philosophy that lays the emphasis on urban areas is not new, and has its origins in the way the colonial state imposed its rule across Nigeria and other colonized societies. But, this approach to policing became even more glaring since the late 1970s and early 1980s, with the imposition of neo-liberal economic programmes that sought to roll back the state from the provision of critical social services. Rolling back the state had serious implications, not only in terms of the state's ability to

impose control, but also in its capacity to project itself as an institution that has "legitimate monopoly over the means of violence.

The rise in private security organizations, the expansion of vigilante groups, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SAWLS), the collapse of informal channels of conflict resolution and of securing communities; all became significant channels for citizens to protect or defend themselves in the face of the state's declining capacity to impose effective control. In effect, various contenders to its power bandits inclusive continuously tested the limits of the state in actions such as cattle rustling and other forms of violence, (Centre for Democracy and Development 2015; p.4-6).

The incessant bloody clashes between the cattle herders and sedentary farmer communities have come to pose serious human security challenges in northern Nigeria. Between 2010 and 2015, the region lost 6,500 persons, \$14 billion and 62,000 internally displaced in 850 perennial clashes in the North Central region alone, Daily Trust (2017). Given the multi-faceted dimensions and the surrounding narratives, tracking down the perpetrators of the crime and finding solutions to the drivers became politically sensitive. In 2017, the clashes between nomadic herdsman and local farmers led to at least 549 deaths and displacement of thousands in 14 states, Ameh (2018). The killings had continued unabated with the mass burial of over 70 native farmers that lost their lives through the attacks of herdsman in Benue State in January 2018. As such, the phenomenon of rural banditry in northern Nigeria has transmogrified "from crisis of nomadism to state crisis" (Ibrahim, 2016, p.7).

The federal government has recognized the apparent linkage between rural banditry and illicit mining. It suspended all forms of mining in Zamfara state in early April of 2019. Transhumance the movement of cattle is poorly regulated. This has seen it being infiltrated by criminals, which has led to the intensification of cattle rustling in the region. In states such as Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara and Kebbi, there exists clan of livestock bandits who specialize in mass cattle raids. While some of these cattle rustling gangs are affiliated to local and transnational syndicates, a number of them are mercenaries of Boko Haram. A cattle rustling constitutes a valuable source of funding for the terror group.

A number of 'push and pull' factors accounted for movements of nomadic herdsman. Firstly, drought and desertification in West African Sahelian belt occasioned the search for water and pastures beyond the original environment. Secondly, the exponential rise in cattle rustling in northern Nigeria, especially in the Kamuku forest of Kaduna, Falgore forest of Kano, Dansadau forest in Zamfara, as well as the Dajin Rugu forest that stretches through the three states, contributed to migration, (International Crisis Group, 2017). Thirdly, the insurgency

in the North-East, which feeds on cattle rustling, pursued the herders to move to where they enjoyed lesser risks. Thus, transhumance has helped the pastoralists to survive the climatic crises and maintain cultural affinity, (Egwu, 2015). Fourthly, population growth among the crop farmers and the increased demand for the limited land spaces for large-scale crops production pitted the two (sedentary and pastoral) farmers against the other. The clashes were usually precipitated by trespasses or movements of livestock beyond the usual transhumance corridors (where they existed), which expectedly led to destruction of crops on farmlands. The cattle herders, in turn, faced the risk of physical assaults, attacks on their lives and, in extreme cases, thievery and killings of their cattle by farmlands owners who suffered varying degree of losses as a result of massive livestock encroachment (Uche and Iwuamadi, 2018, p.72).

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on frustration-aggression model. It was propounded and captured in a monograph by five scholars in Yale Institute of Human Relations in 1939. The major assumption of the model is that “aggression is always a consequence of frustration”, and “that the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression” (Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939, p.1). They also defined frustration as “an interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal response at its proper time in the behavior sequence” (Dollard, (1939, p.7). The interrogations and disputations that the perspective generated led one of the proponents to intervene with some modifications of the central thesis. Thus, Miller (1941) noted that it was too general to assume that frustration must always lead to aggression or that aggression is always propelled by frustration. His intervention led to the second lap of the hypothesis which reflected a more acceptable reality thus: frustration produces instigations to a number of different types of response, one of which is instigation to some form of aggression. However, fifty years later, a significant modification came from Berkowitz (1989) who argued that aggression can be driven by inherent personal benefits to the aggressor and not necessarily by past wrongdoings and that people are more akin to attack when they discover that they are willfully sabotaged or denied what it’s legitimately theirs than when the interference is an accidental

occurrence. He surmised it as “frustrations are aversive events and generate aggressive inclinations only to the extent that they produce negative effect”, (Berkowitz, 1989, p.71).

Causes and Dynamics of Banditry in Northern Nigeria

The root causes of rural banditry and conflicts require an understanding of the social contexts, history, development and dynamics of the often conflictual, but also symbiotic relationship between two production systems, Agricultural and pastoral, that did not only depend on a land and its related resources, but are also fundamentally different in important respects. This relationship has been progressively complicated by shifting demographics of both human and livestock populations; evolving social practices related to the use and management of land and livestock resources. The impact of changing ecological and environmental forces that have progressively effected rainfall patterns, availability of foliage and increasing rate of desertification; the expansion non- Agricultural uses of land such as the growth of urban areas and the construction of roads; the collapse of formal and informal channels of conflict resolution between both groups, the expansion of criminal entrepreneur for whom rustling is big business; the well documented extortionate practices of security agencies, which in some cases propel revenge attacks; well as by migratory movements, in particular transhumance within and outside Northern Nigeria, and in other parts of the country and in west Africa in general.

Resource conflict occurs at the vortex of internecine conflict between agricultural crop growers and transhumant pastoralists, and is linked to issues of cattle rustling and rural banditry. The basis of the conflict itself can be found in the scarcity of land and water resources. The scarcity arises from a number of factors, including changes in agrarian relations, climate change, and environmental decline. The tendency for competition among different occupational groups over scarce resources further exacerbates the tension. Such competition tends to pitch different communal groups into deadly confrontations, especially where occupational and communal boundaries overlap. This appears to be the case in the conflict between Fulani herdsmen and the different ethnic groups that constitute the bulk of agricultural farmers in the central and southern parts of Nigeria during the seasonal movement of cattle for pasture (Samuel, 2015, p.31).

Table 1: Underlying Causes of Rural Banditry in Northern Nigeria

S/N	Causes	
1	Unemployment	44%
2	Ethno -Religious Conflict	23%
3	Greed	18%
4	Robbery -	5.9%
5	Insecurity -	5.9%
6	Psychological Needs	2.3%
	TOTAL	100%

Source: Northern Government forum, 2024

From table 1, the analysis indicated that, unemployment having the highest percentage of (44%) is identified as the most significant driver of rural banditry, implying economic hardship and lack of livelihood options are major catalysts, while ethno-religious conflict conflicts have (23%) which also plays a large role, reflecting the tension and violence stemming from identity-based divisions. In another vein, greed has been regarded as another causes of rural banditry which indicates (18%), suggest that some individuals engage in banditry primarily for financial gain, independence of social or economic pressures. Robbery and insecurity each having (5.9%), this highlights the opportunistic and lawlessness environment that enables banditry. Lastly, psychological needs which amount for (2.3%) indicates motivations linked to trauma, revenge, or mental health factor. Conclusively, the data shows that, a combination of economic, social and personal motivation drives rural banditry, but economic conditions are primary factor.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

In response, a military-led offensive was ordered by the Federal Government and a state of emergency declared by State Governors in Northern Nigeria against cattle rustlers and bandits. These are beginning to yield positive results. However, the ongoing reign of bandits in rural communities within northern Nigerian continues to heighten public insecurity. The death toll resulting from the activities of cattle rustlers and the seemingly intractable conflict over limited resources between farmers and herdsmen is alarming. For example, in the space of only a month, between January 1 and February 2, 2016, around 100 people have been allegedly killed across Nassarawa, Benue, Taraba, Kaduna and Abuja (Idayat, 2015, p7-8). Examining the root causes of rural banditry and social conflict requires an understanding of its historical trajectory, social contexts, development and the dynamics of the often conflictual, but also symbiotic relationship between two production systems (agricultural and pastoral) that not only depend on land and its related resources, but are also fundamentally different in important respects. It is against this backdrop that we undertook a broad interrogation of the economic and social forces that might have triggered the current realities.

The study also focuses on wide-ranging issues, including: cattle rustling; animal husbandry; transhumance; grazing reserves; herdsmen and farmers' association. The literature also reveals factors which account for rural banditry and social conflicts include: ecological and climate change and consistent shift in the human and livestock population; expansion in non-agricultural use of land; weak state capacity and the provision of security; proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs); rise of criminality and insecurity in rural areas; and weakening or collapse of informal conflict resolution mechanisms (Idayat, 2015, p7-8).

Rural banditry and cattle rustling intersect with several other important themes in the Nigerian political economy: the problems of human and national security; altered balance in state-society relations; the impact of climate change on agricultural practices and different occupational groups; the emerging challenge of food security and the modernization of agriculture; and the question of intergroup relations and social harmony in Nigeria's diverse and plural context. Even more important cattle rustling is impact on livestock production. Livestock production is not only a significant aspect of agriculture in Nigeria's quest to diversify its economy, it also remains crucial to the overall wellbeing of pastoralist communities, particularly the nomadic Fulani herders. Furthermore, cattle rustling and rural banditry appear to be tied to the incessant conflict between Fulani herdsmen and crop farmers. The conflict may be connected to the wider context of identity politics and intergroup relations, including the relationships between pastoralist groups on the one hand and the Nigerian state system on the other. Transhumant pastoralists are perceived as violent and deliberately armed to deal with unsuspecting crop farmers; the farmers alleged intentional crop damage by animals. The herders, on the other hand, perceive themselves to be victims of political marginalization, lacking a voice within the Nigerian state system. The exclusion of nomadic Fulani herders from the policy process and their lack of voice is so acute that the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBA), an urban-based Fulani pressure group, stands as the only known civic group that engages in policy advocacy on their behalf (Idayat, 2015, p15).

In more recent times, there has been a dramatic increase in the spates of conflict between herders and farming communities, alongside the attendant problems of rural banditry and cattle rustling. This increase in conflict results from increasing sedentarisation along grazing routes. Increased sedentarisation could be seen as pastoralist communities' response to the numerous challenges and constraints they are facing; sedentarisation has been one means of adapting to changing conditions over time. This is what Manger (1994) identifies as a part of 'expanding the spatial scale of exploitation', or the 'uncanny ability to survive and sometimes prosper under considerable adversity' (World Bank, 1987). Unfortunately, this has given rise to misconceptions regarding the self-inflicted hardships of herders by an apparent choice of a traditional lifestyle, which inhibits their capacity for innovation and adaptation to change (Concept Note, 2006). Consequently, there is a negative perception of pastoralists; in the frequent violent conflicts with agricultural farmers, the pastoralists are often blamed for problems related to crop damage, farming along cattle routes, and access to water. As Tukur (2013) has summarized the issue, more often than not nomadic Fulani herders are perceived to be prone to violence.

The tendency to blame nomadic herders for the problems they bring as an occupational group is reinforced by perspectives like the 'cattle complex' and the 'tragedy of the commons' in the academic research on pastoralism. The cattle complex concerns environmental damage that harms pastoral societies; the environmental damage is attributed to inefficient traditional methods of raising livestock, and herders' penchant to keep large number of animals beyond their economic and reproductive functions. The tragedy of the commons suggests that pastoralists, primarily driven by self-interest in their use of land and water resources, overgraze the land; in pursuing their immediate interests, they compromise the long-term interests of all grazers (Iro, 2015). The tendency to simply blame pastoralists from these perspectives obscures the multiple meanings cattle have for pastoralists, and how the choices they make are informed by the survival strategies of pastoralist households (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2015, p.16).

Closely associated with this is the tendency to see nomadic Fulani herders as the primary perpetrators of rural banditry, including cattle rustling. The fact that Fulani nomads are familiar with the forest tracts tends to reinforce that perception. There are documented instances of pastoralists who resort to rustling after losing cattle to disease, inclement weather, and violence; there also are Fulani nomads active in the international syndicate of cattle rustlers. Fulani herdsmen, however, are also victims of the illicit transactions (IRIN, 2013). There were reported cases of cow population depletion around

the Birnin Gwari in Kaduna State, an area that reportedly experienced cattle theft by criminal gangs. It is believed that the cows lost include some lost by Fulani nomads as part of the incessant resource conflict with settled farmers and/or fellow Fulani rustlers.

Cattle rustling and associated forms of rural banditry have persisted despite effort by the Nigerian state to fight them. The Nigerian police, for example, have constituted a 'Task Force on Cattle Rustling and Associated Crime', saddled with the responsibility for preemptive intelligence gathering, anti-cattle rustling action and prevention of associated crimes. The task force is also responsible for the investigation and potential prosecution of people involved in rustling. Other initiatives include a proposed bill to establish a 'Federal Commission to Cater for and Manage Transhumant Stock Routes and Grazing Reserve Areas'; the bill is currently pending before the National Assembly. Furthermore, the federal government has decided to provide states with N100 billion to establish mini ranches (Daily Trust, November 20, 2014). These initiatives have yet to be executed, and are being contested. Crop farmers consider the idea of grazing reserves and routes inimical to their interests, and defenders of nomadic pastoralism consider sedentarisation an erosion of the pastoral way of life (Idayat, 2015, p. 17).

Yet the context that frames the conflict between nomadic cattle grazers and sedentary crop farmers is global in nature, and efforts to grapple with the challenges need to draw from existing regional and sub-regional frameworks, and from existing initiatives intended to address the problems. At the sub-regional level of West Africa, for example, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has recognized the critical role livestock mobility plays in preserving the environment and maximizing livestock productivity. This recognition has provided improved institutional frameworks for herd mobility, and for some of the reformist legislation in a number of countries (including Niger, Mali, and Mauritania). The framework and legislation have sought to address issues of pastoral land use, the provision of pastoral 'home areas' and livestock corridors, including free movement of cattle and herders across borders (Hesse and Thebaud, 2006).

Similarly, at the regional level of the African Union, there is recognition of the need for legislative, institutional, and operational reforms in pastoral policy development. There is recognition of the need for coordination of political commitment to development of pastoral policy, consultations with pastoral communities in the development of appropriate policies, and the role indigenous institutions play in conflict resolution (CSAO, 2007). Although these regional frameworks may not necessarily address the peculiarity of some national or regional situations, they are nonetheless useful reference

points, (Centre for Democracy and Development 2015, p.18).

Banditry and other causes of insecurity in northern Nigeria have been allowed to degenerate into a complex national emergency with dire territorial implications. This mirrors exactly what happened with the Boko Haram insurgency. From sporadic incidents, Boko Haram began launching systematic attacks targeted at individuals, communities and, eventually, the state. There's no more effective solution than forceful inland and frontier policing. Such policing must deal with the region's peculiar circumstances of diverse borderlines, forestlands and hinterlands. This requires a tactical synergy between grassroots vigilantes and the state security operatives.

The federal government's current counter banditry effort, based on military reconnaissance and raids, is good and commendable. But it has failed to bring about the needed respite, owing largely to the operational challenges arising from insufficient knowledge of the terrain. This makes the involvement of local vigilantes and community watch groups, who have a better knowledge of the terrain, more important. However, to guard against possible excesses and abuse, people in these structures must be properly trained, equipped and supervised. The way forward, then, is the development of grassroots policing, enriched by local personnel and intelligence. The success of the civilian joint task force, comprising local vigilantes and volunteer neighborhood watchers, in combating the Boko Haram insurgency in the lower Lake Chad basin shows the possible value of this sort of community policing.

Banditry, Cattle Rustling and the Human Security Dilemma

The deteriorating situation of human security in Nigeria accounts for the increasing incidents of banditry and cattle rustling. 'Human security' is much broader than national security, which tends to focus on the security of the state in military terms, and the protection of the state from external aggression (Blenc, 2004). Human security shares the conceptual space of the people-centric approach to human development pioneered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Central to the idea of human security, as espoused by the 1994 Human Development Report on Human Security, are two important concerns: freedom from fear intended to indicate freedom from violence, and freedom from want, which is intended to indicate freedom from poverty. In this conception of human security, human beings become the 'vital core', with a 'fundamental set of functions related to survival, livelihood and dignity' as the irreducible minimum (Blench, 2004).

The multidimensional nature of human security is underlined by the recognition given to economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security. The number of central issues is greatly expanded,

to include the welfare of citizens, larger issues of development, and redistribution of wealth among the different strata of society. There is also concern given to issues of governance, the realization of social citizenship for subaltern social groups and classes, and respect for group identity and self-determination of minority groups. The key assumption is that a nation cannot be secure if it fails to address issues of governance, unemployment, and corruption, all of which can subvert the rule of law and can undermine the welfare of the citizenry, even if the state has the most modernized army or the most sophisticated police force.

The human security situation in Nigeria has remained precarious despite the results of the 2013 rebasing of the Nigerian economy, which identified the country as having the 28th largest economy in the world and the largest in Africa, with the per capita GDP rose from \$1,555 to \$2,688.73 For example, Nigeria is ranked low on the Human Development Index (HDI) report of the UNDP, which focuses on life expectancy, school enrolment, and income indices, and is similarly ranked low on Inequality Adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) since 2010; from the countries measured, the report ranked Nigeria 153rd in 2011 and 2012, and 152nd in 2013. These rankings tell the sad story of the declining material wellbeing of Nigerians. The crisis of human security in Nigeria has its roots in high levels of corruption and an entrenched culture of impunity; these are coupled with an absence of efforts on the part of government at all levels to implement pro poor policies, and to effect redistribution of wealth (UNDP, 2013)

The argument that human insecurity contributes to the problems of banditry and cattle rustling in Katsina State is partly borne out by the results of the survey. Respondents were asked to identify the underlying causes of rural banditry among factors such as unemployment, ethno-religious conflict, greed, robbery, insecurity, and psychological issues. The responses to the survey indicated show that 44% attributed banditry to unemployment, while 23% identified rural banditry as fallout from frequent ethno-religious conflicts. Another 18% of the respondents identified greed as the underlying cause; robbery, insecurity and psychological factors were identified as the underlying causes in declining order (Barrey, 2004).

Discussion

The most salient and compelling finding across the northern region is the changing demographic, ecological and climate conditions, and their impact on Agricultural and pastoral production systems. Changing ecological and climatic conditions, especially in the Northeastern part of the country, together with major demographic shifts in the human and livestock population, over the past several decades have significantly affected both the

agricultural and pastoral production systems. The phenomenon of desertification, declining water points and foliage shrinking arable land and population movements have all dramatically affected the means of livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of farmers and pastoralists. This has created additional stress in the delicate relationship between both groups that as the competition over land, pasture and water becomes more acute.

Policy needs to seriously address the interplay between ecological and environmental factors on the one hand, and agricultural and pastoral production practices on the other, through multiple measures directed at each of these factors: coordinated and sustained programmes for arresting and reversing desertification ; enhancing agricultural and pastoral production through a deliberate and conscious effort of modernization; protecting designated routes for livestock movements; creating conducive and culturally sedentarisation through the enhancement of pastoral production, in consultation with pastoral communities (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2015, p.7).

The role of land, land use rights and alienation of land in rural banditry and conflicts be expand in both human and livestock populations has brought additional pressure to bear on land and land-use practices. In addition, expansion in the non-agricultural uses of land such as the expansion of urban areas constitutes another serious pressure on land. These pressures have adversely affected both farmers and pastoralists alike, and seem to be major catalyst of rural conflicts and banditry. By closing off cattle routes, neglecting grazing reserves and acquiring large expanses of land, such pressure has further intensified competition for land-based resources, deepening existing and creating additional avenues of conflict between farmers and pastoralists.

The need for more coordinated and integrated land-use practices that take the changing needs of both agricultural and pastoralist production systems is urgently needed. Such practices should take into consideration the symbiotic relationship between both production systems and their significance to their practitioners in general. Addressing the issue will require multiple strategies, including the modernization of both production systems (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2015, p.8).

State capacity and the provision of security is key, particularly those from Benue, plateau and Nasarawa have drawn attention to both the role of state security agencies in these recurrent conflicts, as well as in the incidents of

banditry. While it has been acknowledged that security agencies are trying to cope under very difficult conditions, there is a need to begin to focusing more closely on the nature and security needs of both farmers and pastoralists, as well as on what will be required by security agencies to effectively address these conflicts and cases of rural banditry. First, the security agencies, especially in the rural areas, are understaffed and poorly equipped to address the challenges confronting them. Second, with the weakening or collapse of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, the burden on security services to address conflicts that were dealt with informally in a recent past rose informally in a recent past rose dramatically. Third, there is credible reports complicity of some of the security agents in some of the conflicts. More specifically, such a role has been more noticeable in the north central zone.

In Benue, plateau and Nasarawa states however, responses by law enforcement to pastoralists complaints of intimidation and attacks by their farming neighbors often fell on deaf ears, even as their families and livestock are being destroyed. Similarly, instances have also been reported where farmers have accused security agencies of siding with pastoralists, and of intimidation and extortion. Forth, with the proliferation of SALWs contexts like these are likely to push either or both groups into taking steps to secure themselves, if they feel that the state is either not able or willing to cater for their security needs. And finally, the sprouting of vigilante and other informal or private security organizations has complicated the situation further in the way these outfits intervene; and often usurp the powers of formal security agencies.

The growing evidence of the menace of cattle rustling and rural banditry in contemporary Nigeria is seen in the disturbing increase in cattle rustling incidents in different parts of the country, and in the accompanying humanitarian tragedies. Recent documentation of cattle rustling incidents by the Sunday Trust Newspaper (June 1, 2014) brings the pervasive nature of cattle rustling in Nigeria into clear relief. Cattle rustling have a global character, and clear economic consequences for countries where it is entrenched. Recent Nigerian evidence shows just how frightening it has become. Aside from the estimated high figures of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and forced migrations of some victims into neighboring countries, the estimated 300 deaths and 60,000 rustled cattle in both urban and rural settings indicate how pervasive cattle rustling has become (CDD 2015, p.9-11).

Table 2: Estimated No. of Rustled Cattle and Associated Deaths in 2019

State	Herders Killed	No. of Cattle Rustled
Plateau	213	28,200
Nasarawa	137	25,400
Benue	79	13000
Zamfara	200	24,230
Niger	56	8,011
Gombe	11	5,045
Sokoto	21	1120
Yobe	8	1150
Bauchi	3	1421
Kwara	Nil	100
Kano	Nil	1000
Kaduna	34	227,000
Katsina	101	4,457

Source: Compiled by the Researchers, 2024

Table 2 shows that, based on herders killed in Plateau state, 213 herders were killed and 28,200 cattle were rustled. In Nasarawa state, 137 cattle were killed while 25,400 were rustled, in addition, 179 cattle were killed and 13000 were rustled in Benue. In Zamfara state, the table shows that, 200 cattle were killed, while 24,230 were rustled. To understand it more, 11 cattle were killed and 5,045 were rustled in Gombe state. The table also indicated that, 21 cattle were killed and 1120 were rustled in Sokoto state. Yobe state witnessed the killing of 8 cattle and rustling of 1150, while in the same table, 3 were killed and 1421 cattle were rustled in Bauchi state. In Kwara state, the table indicated that, there has been no cattle being killed while 100 have been rustled. In the same vein, there have been no cattle killed in Kano state, but 1000 cattle have been rustled, likewise in Kaduna state, the table indicated that, 34 cattle were killed and 227,000 were rustled. Finally, in Katsina state, 101 were killed while 4,457 cattle were rustled. Analysis in this segment indicated the number of cattle killed and rustled in the northern Nigeria due to insecurity and banditry in the north. Even more intriguing is that cattle rustling in many parts of the country tends to be linked with apparent criminal activities, and with wider political and identity issues. In Benue State, for example, media images generated around the hostility between farmers and grazers link the problems to foreign mercenaries, and to activities of Islamic extremists who had targeted Predominantly-Christian communities. In some instances, these activities were linked to the Boko Haram insurgency in the north-eastern parts of the country; extremists were supposedly extending their frontiers to destroy the Christian communities of the Middle Belt. Another example is seen in the tendency to interpret the cycle of violence in Plateau State between the “settlers” Hausa/Fulani communities (including pastoralists and the indigenous ethnic communities) in terms of the Islamic agenda of the former. This view is widely shared by Plateau elites, who have

played a critical mobilization role in their communities (Concerned Plateau Citizens, 2024).

Proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), is one of the most serious factors in the expansion and intensity of rural banditry and conflict. In 2014 alone, reports indicate that large quantities of SALWs were smuggled in and out of the hands of non-state actors. The concentration of such arms in the hands of non-state actors poses serious threats to security, and does much to fuel rural conflicts and banditry. The proliferation of SALWs in the central states of plateau, Nasarawa, Kaduna and Benue is partially linked to the growing privatization of violence, which seems to have led to situations where non-state actors such as vigilantes and other private security outfits secure and use weapons illegally.

Rise in criminality and insecurity in rural areas is one of the effects of the proliferation of SALWs and the expansion of criminal activities. Such weapons are increasingly common in highway robberies, community conflicts, as well as in the activities of bandits. This has clearly emerged in the brutal acts of banditry by criminal gangs in Zamfara, Benue and Plateau states. These practices are gradually manifesting in the emergence of a criminal economy where raids are organized for commercial purposes, especially against livestock. It is indeed clear that banditry, and cattle rustling in particular, can neither be profitable nor sustained for any length of time, except if there is a ready market for the rustled livestock. The activities of such groups need to be brought firmly under control by devising mechanisms for effectively monitoring, apprehending and prosecuting them.

Weakening or collapse of informal conflict resolution mechanisms have overburdening of the formal security sector and its diminished ability to effectively address rural banditry and other forms of criminal violence is on a par with the weakening or collapse of informal conflict resolution mechanisms. Community leaders such as Ardo'en that were traditional peace brokers are no longer

able to effectively control a radicalized youth in their communities. These now also respond to their attackers by arming themselves.

Rural banditry and conflict have an International dimension. The seasonal movements of transhumance, the impact of environment and ecology, demographic changes, as well as domestic agricultural and livestock development policies have implications beyond national boundaries; not just with our immediate neighbors, but also with countries as far as the central Africa Republic. In formulating policies to address banditry, attention needs to be given to these elements.

CONCLUSION

The federal and state governments should survey, demarcate and gazette existing grazing reserves. They should at the same time plan for newer reserves across northern Nigeria. The government should also undertake urgent revitalization of the country's moribund grazing reserves routes and establish a new model of grazing reserves in all the states of northern Nigeria. Mitigation of the impact climate and Environmental decline is recognized. Also, deliberate government efforts aimed at mitigating climate change should be encouraged. Operational readiness of security agencies such as the police should be strengthened through increased staffing, equipment and training to enable them to professionally, efficiently and promptly investigate and prosecute criminals without fear or favor. Government should take a lead in bringing together various sections of the rural community: farmers, pastoralists and their associations; local vigilantes; cattle breeders and farmers associations such as MACBAN (Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria); and All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) community leaderships such as Ardo'en, and security agencies to begin to identify, monitor discuss and manage potential threats before they become open conflicts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cattle rustling and associated forms of rural banditry have persisted despite efforts by the Nigerian state to fight them.

1. The Nigerian police, should constitute a 'Task Force on Cattle Rustling and Associated Crime', saddled with the responsibility for preemptive intelligence gathering, anti-cattle rustling action and prevention of associated crimes. The task force is also responsible for the investigation and potential prosecution of people involved in rustling.
2. Other initiatives should include a proposed bill to establish a 'Federal Commission to cater for and Manage Transhumant Stock Routes and Grazing Reserve Areas'; such a bill should be send to the National Assembly.

3. Furthermore, the federal government should provide states with funds to establish mini-ranches. These initiatives have yet to be executed, and are being contested. Crop farmers consider the idea of grazing reserves and routes inimical to their interests, and defenders of nomadic pastoralism consider sedentarisation an erosion of the pastoral way of life, these contentions should be look at, in other to avert conflict.
4. In order to formulate effective public policy, there must be understanding of the direct consequences of changes in agrarian relations and climate change for resource scarcity. Furthermore, there must be consideration of how they are linked to resourcebased conflict, rural banditry, and cattle rustling.
5. Rural poverty and deprivation need to be urgently addressed to stem the increasing tide of rural banditry and its negative effects on the rural economy.
6. There should be an urgent need to strengthen the traditional security system and its conflict resolution component to fill the gap of the declining capacity state formal security agencies to meet security challenges of rural areas.
7. The way forward, then, is the development of grassroots policing or Community Policing, enriched by local personnel and intelligence to collaborate with security personnel in order to tame the menace of insecurity at the community level.

REFERENCES

- Ameh, C. G. (2018, January 30). Amnesty International Reveals How Many Nigerians Fulani Herdsmen Killed in 2018. Daily Post. Retrieved from <http://dailypost.ng/2018/01/30/amnesty-international-reveals-many-nigerians-fulani-killed-in-2018>.
- Barrey, R. E. "General Principles of Security, Jos" The African council on narcotics and crime Prevention (2004).
- Blench, R. "National Resources Conflict in North Central Nigeria". A Handbook and Case Studies. MallamDendo Ltd.(2004)
- Centre for democracy and development, Pastoral Resolve (PARE) and Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSPR), (2015).
- Chukuma Al Okoli; (2019). What can be done to fight Rural Banditry in Northern Nigeria, (2019).
- Concept Note."International Conference on the Future of Transhumance Pastoralism in West and Central Africa, November 20-24.(2006)
- Daily Trust. (2017, September 25). 6,500 Killed, \$14bn Lost to Herders/Farmers Clashes – Report. Daily Trust.

Retrieved from <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/6-500-killed14bn-lost-to-herders-farmers-clashes-report.html>.

Daudi, E.F. "Livestock Identification Traceability and Tracking". CEWARN. (2009).

Dollard J, Miller, N. E, Doob, L. W., Mowrer, O. H., & Sears, R. R. (1939). *Frustration and Aggression*, New Haven, CT; Yale University Press.

Egwu, S. (2015). The Political Economy of Rural Banditry in Contemporary Nigeria. In M. J. Kuna and J. Ibrahim (Eds.), *Rural Banditry and Conflicts in Northern Nigeria* (pp. 14-67). Abuja: Centre of Democracy and Development (CDD).

Fabusoro, E. "Key Issues in Livelihoods Security of Migrant Fulani Pastoralists: Empirical evidence from Southwest Nigeria". AEGIS European Conference on African studies – African Alternatives: Initiative and Creativity beyond Current Constraints – 11-14July 2007 African Studies Centre, Leiden, the Netherlands. (2007)

Ibrahim, J. (2016, April 4). Rural Banditry: From the Crisis of Nomadism to State Crisis. Daily Trust. Retrieved from <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/news/opinion/rural-banditry-from-the-crisis-of-nomadism-to-state-crisis>.

Jasper C. Uche and Chijioke K. IWUAMADI; (2019). *Rural Banditry and Community Resilience in the Nimbo Community*.

Kyari, M., & Chinyere, A. (2015). Social Impact of Rural Banditry. In M. J. Kuna and J. Ibrahim (Eds.), *Rural Banditry and Conflicts in Northern Nigeria* (pp.167 -188). Abuja: Centre of Democracy and Development (CDD).

Pastoral Resolve. Retrieved from <https://pastoralresolve.blogspot.com.ng/2016/06/addressing-rural-banditry-in-northern-Nigeria.html> A policy Brief. Pastoral Resolve, retrieved from <https://pastoralresolve.blogspot.com.ng/2016/06/addressing-rural-banditry-in-northern-Nigeria.html>

Kuna M,J. and Ibrahim, J. (2015), *Rural Banditry and Conflicts in Northern Nigeria*.

Human Development Report of 1994, issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 1994).

Human Security Research Group, Human Security Report, <http://www.humansecurityreport.info/> (accessed November 14, 2010).