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## Banditry-Herdsmen Activities in Nigeria and National Development

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**Abstract:** This study examines the interface between banditry-herdsmen activities in Nigeria and how it undermines national development. The study upholds that banditry-herdsmen activities ranging from kidnapping, raping, maiming, destruction farm land etc. have forcefully mutilated cultivation for fear of been unjustly attacked in the process. Consequently, trade and commerce have suffered tremendously as a result. The study anchored on the propositional trappings of structural functionalism theory to explain and bear witness to the argument that the failure of government in its primary responsibilities of providing the basic needs for its citizens resulted in the banditry-herdsmen activities in the country. We relied on documentary method for data collection, and content analysis for analysing the materials collected. The study revealed that many of the best brains and man power have fled for fear of either being kidnapped, killed or maimed, this not only resulting in inflation, but also undermining national development in the country. Recommended amongst other things, a window of dialogue utmost importance between the aggrieved parties within the government setting, community stakeholders, community youths among others.

**Key words:** Kidnapping, Extrajudicial-Killings, Illegal-Mining, Raping, Displacement

## Introduction

In the recent time, security threat has formed the mainstream of global debate due to its devastating effect on global economy of both the developed and underdeveloped nations. This is not exception in the case of Nigeria as one the emerging global economy, with anticipated high hope of dominating the global economy in the nearest future after Chinese economy due to its significant rapid growth in the recent time (Ubi, 2017). Etymologically, security threat in Nigeria has its profound trace from the age long ethno-religious clashes between the acclaimed major ethnic groupings of Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba; intra and inter-communal rifts; and the most recent Boko Haram, Banditry and Herdsmen activities in the country. The banditry-herdsmen activities in Nigeria in the recent times have constituted nightmare, worrisome and a source of great concern to many Nigerians both within and in diaspora. On this reality, the argument went beyond what can be termed as mere crimes or pockets of killings by unidentified individuals through their activities (Akpor-Robaro & Lanre-Babalola, 2019). Similarly, Obi, Chinweze and Onyejebu (2018) argued from the reality point of view that Nigeria under these activities is under a severe internal security siege and menace, as the threat has both political and socio-economic effects. Each of these effects has critical influence in the political and economic stability of the

nation on one end; and the overall national development of the country on the other end.

Furthermore, the argument advanced amongst academic scholars, professionals and practitioners, with trace to many factors in which the activities of Fulani-herdsmen snowballed into banditry appear to be major underlying factor underpinning the socio-economic development of the country. Consequently, the activities of this group in the recent time ranging from pillaging, raping, killing and kidnapping amongst others constitute serious security challenge in the society. This which profoundly dominated in the national dailies on daily basis on how these bandits and shepherds strategically stage deadly attacks on several defenseless farmers and communities, with sophisticated assault guns of AK-47 (Ajibefun, 2018). In consonance with Ajibefun, Gadzama (2018), on careful assessment of these threats to national security reveal that the activities of the armed group—bandits and herdsmen are more than any other security challenge in the country at the moment, which directly not only constituting threat to economic stability of the country, but also a serious threat to the overall national development of the country on the other hand.

Consequently, as observed by Obi, Chinweze and Onyejebu (2018) that in the recent time, the activities

of the bandits and armed herdsmen have resulted in unimaginable destruction and displacement of many communities, as they often carry out vicious attacks on the local communities, kidnapping and killing scores of the innocent citizens of the country, particularly, the defenseless farmers. The farmers who are supposedly contributing to the growth of the socio-economic development of the country through their bumper farm produce are now being threatened by the activities of these group of individuals (bandits and herdsmen); and most often casually killed without jurisdictions in their farmlands. Worthy to note that this situation is not peculiar to rural and local areas of the country only, but everywhere round the country. This is validated through the observation of Amaza (2020) that the so-called activities of both bandits and armed herdsmen have degenerated into kidnapping for ransom in the broad daylight even in the metro cities of the country, particularly on the major highways of 190-kilometer expressway of Abuja-Kaduna road. This therefore, causing traveler who may be travelling for one genuine business trip or the other a serious nightmare, sleepless night on the risk of engaging on the road. This Indeed affected almost the 36 states of the federation, with particular reference to the Agatu community in Benue State, Akure in Ondo State, Bukuru area in Plateau State, Oke Ogun area in Oyo State, Gassaka and Bali local government areas in

Taraba State to Nimbo in Enugu State, just to mention but a few (Ogunbyi, 2018), with an obvious mission to cause insecurity in every area they go to. And indeed sorrows, tear, insecurity and blood trail wherever they go (Ogunbiyi, 2018). This is so because they deliberately operate in such audacious fashion that makes mockery not only on Nigerian national security alone, but also on the socio-economic development of the country.

Ironically, before now this group, especially the herdsmen were peacefully co-existed with their host communities all over the country, but currently perceived as perpetual enemies of humanity all over the country due to their destructive operations. Communities in both the North and Southern Nigeria never had serious disagreements with them in the past. It was a common practice (culture) and fun to invite them stay in the farms after harvest for the purpose of enriching the farmlands for yet another farming season. Compounding the rather fragile situation is, the utterances of some highly respected individuals, particularly from the Fulani extraction making satire out of such a treble situation saying “herdsmen are merely declared persona-non-grata in their own states act of religious and ethnic sentiment” (Obi, Chinweze and Onyejebu, 2018, p. 32). Worryingly, is the action of some unscrupulous persons who have continuously

trying to fuel such disruptive sentiment for their cheap political goals in the society (Gadzama, 2018), with little or no rational consideration of its implication on the unity and socio-economic development of the country.

In the light of the above, Okereke (2012) and Bello (2013) consequently observed that farmers can no longer peacefully engage in their normal daily farming activities for the fears of herdsmen and bandits, who have left so many families homeless, some children orphans, and some who managed to survive become asylum seekers in their country-home. Similarly, banditry attacks; Fulani herdsmen-farmers incessant clashes have often pitched religious animosity—Christians/Muslims against each other because greater number of the victims appeared to be Christians in the affected states of Benue, Taraba, Nassarawa to mention but a few, while fewer cases of attack in other states dominated by Muslims (Obi & Onyejebu, 2018). Similarly, recent studies by Okereke (2012) and Kasarachi (2016) have strongly shown that, serious conflict erupted between Fulani herdsmen and farmers has led to loss of lives, valuable properties and destruction of vast expanse of arable agricultural farmlands thereby posing serious threat to food security since farmers for fear of been attacked could no longer go to farm and harvest their farm produce

(Obi, Chinweze and Onyejebu, 2018). The recent killings, displacement recorded by bandits and herdsmen on communities and farmlands have caused many loss of their major source of livelihood and unbearable situation in the society. Worthy of note, the acclaimed killing of cows by farmers as the root cause of herdsmen-farmers conflict is often instigated by the armed herdsmen who often stray their cattle to feed on crops and agricultural produce of the farmers.

This recent wave of attacks and killings in the contemporary Nigeria society as been masterminded by the armed herdsmen and bandits have been observed to have disrupted socio-economic, religious and educational activities, political stability on one end, and seriously threatened the national unity of Nigeria on the other end (Kasarachi, 2016). This therefore forcing thousand of people to abandon their homes and socio-economic engagement for safety of their life. Thus, there is no gainsaying that Nigeria is at a crossroad and gradually drifting to a conflict prone society as the attack intensified (Okereke, 2012), thus causing many Nigerians fears and serious psychological imbalance on daily basis as the situation worsened.

Against this backdrop, this study is propelled to unravel the interface between banditry-herdsmen

activities as it undermines national development in Nigeria. In achieving plausible result, the study is segmented into various sub-headings such as an overview of banditry-herdsmen activities in Nigeria, sponsorship of banditry-herdsmen in Nigeria, socio-economic implication of banditry-herdsmen activities in Nigeria, Government responses to Banditry-Herdsmen Attacks in Nigeria amongst others.

### *Theoretical discourse*

In order to understanding how banditry-herdsmen activities directly or indirectly hampered on the socio-economic development of Nigeria through deadly attacks on farmers and other citizens of the country, thus, leading to insecurity, untold hardship and famine, inflation amongst others in Nigeria. Therefore, this study is anchored on the theoretical framework of Structural Functionalism theory, an offshoot or derivative of system theory. The theory was propounded by Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), an English philosopher and biologist, who sees the society as a system with interrelated or connected units functioning as a whole. He further argued that just as the various organs of the body work together to keep the body functioning, the various parts of the society work together to keep the society functioning (Spencer, 1898) (cited in Mbah, 2014). The theory was further used by an early sociologist, Emile Durkheim

to explain how societies change and survive over time. He further argued that society is a complex system of interrelated and interdependent parts that work together to maintain stability (Durkheim, 1893) (cited in Mbah, 2014), and that society is held together by share values, languages and symbols. Structural functionalism theory was popularized by a group of political scientists such as Gabriel A. Almond, William C. Mitchell and David Apter. The following are the chief proponents of the theory; Malinowski and Radcliff Brown, Talcott Parsons, Robert K. Merton and Mario Levy.

Accordingly, Hara Das and Chouldbury (1997) (cited in Mbah, 2014, p. 123) explicitly highlighted four dominant assumptions of the theory as follow:

- All systems have structure which can be identified. The elements of these structures perform functions within the system, which have meaning only in terms of the system. They are dependent on the system as an active entity for their existence. They are also dependent on each other for their activity.
- Society is a single inter-connected system, each element performing a specific function. The interaction amongst the components is necessary for maintenance of the equilibrium.

- The different parts of society are interrelated and tensions are resolved with mutual help.
- The broad aims or principles underlying a social structure can be identified.

Furthermore, the basic principle of the structural functionalism theory is that every system has some structures which perform some functions that are necessary for the survival of the system; which revolves around certain concepts, structures and functions.

### ***Theory application***

In the light of the forgoing, and in acceptance of the assumptions of the theory, therefore, herdsmen must consider itself as unit saddled with responsibility of contributing towards the socio-economic development of the country through the cattle rearing business, rather than unleashing terror in the society, attacking defenseless farmers who also have same responsibility of contributing to the economic growth and development of the country. In the same vein, famers should also recall that cattle rearing business is a legitimate means of livelihood contributing towards the economic growth of the society, therefore, should stop poisoning their crop waste which the cattle fee on.

Similarly, according to Durkheim who validly argued that society is a complex system of interrelated and

interdependent parts that work together to maintain stability on one end, and that society is also held together by share values, culture and value system (Durkheim, 1893) (cited in Mbah, 2014). Therefore, both parties are essential units in the society, particularly for the common development of socio-economic system of the country, and should work in partnership in order to promote each other's agricultural business. As observed by Ukamaka, Danjuma, Mbolle, Achonam and Mbadiwe, (2017) that originally communities in both the North and Southern Nigeria never had serious disagreements with herdsmen in the past. And that it was a common practice (culture) and fun to invite the herders after harvest to stay in the farms for the purpose of enriching the farmlands for yet another farming season. Similarly, while farmers willingly after harvest invite herders to feed their cattle on the crop waste, the herders in the same vein serve as security guards for farmers and also use their waste as form of manure to fertilize the farms for yet another farming season.

### ***Methodology***

According to Leege and Francis (1974) (as cited in Udeh, 2017), data collection is the science and art of extracting information about the selected properties of units. For the purpose of validity of this study, and security nature of Nigerian state, we adopted a

documentary method of data collection. Documentary method provides us with relevant documented and written materials already in existence even though they were not produced precisely for the direct use of the investigators (Obasi, 1999). To this end, we source data from documented materials—books, book chapters, journal articles, official documents, newspapers, magazines, internet materials and unpublished papers.

Similarly, in complementing the method of data collection adopted, and with regard to complex nature of the study, we adopted content analysis for the purpose of analyzing the documented materials generated through secondary source of data collection. Accordingly, Baily (1978, p. 277) (cited in Abeng, 2017), noted that content analysis is a structured technique for valid analysis of documents in which the researcher first constructs a set of mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories that can be used to analyse documents, and then records the frequency with which each of these categories is observed in the documents studied. Furthermore, content analysis is a research technique for objective, systematic and quantitative description of manifest content of communication (Berelson, 1952).

### *Literature review*

### *An overview of banditry-herdsmen activities in Nigeria*

Nigeria has witnessed an uptick in violent activities of nomadic Fulani herdsmen over the years. This according to Amaza (2016) argued that the threat associated with these activities have lingered with the effects of climate change, rapid desertification of grazing land and lower rainfall making cattle rearing more difficult in the northern Nigeria. Therefore, seeking for alternatives, herdsmen have to journey through the south seeking for fertile grazing land for their cattle. However, such southward movement for search of water and food often leading to destruction of farms in so many states, particularly in the middle belt, southeast, southwest and south-south which are the epicenters of agricultural produce, this inevitably resulting in violent conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in the process (Kazeem, 2017). The chronicle of the inhuman activities of the contemporary Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria is presented in details in Omilusi (2016), Burton (2016) and Duruon (2016), as it ranges from carrying out vicious attacks on the local communities, kidnapping for ransom, raping and killing scores of the innocent citizens of the country, particularly, the defenseless farmers. In the view of the above, Global Terrorism Index (2015) indeed noted that the activity of Fulani herdsmen between 2010 and 2013 had led to the

extrajudicial killings of about 800 people in total in 2013, but intensified in 2014 with an increasing number of about 1,229 people, which posed a serious threat to peace and stability of the country. Recently, states like Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa, Plateau, Kaduna and Katsina have been the worst hit, having suffered devastating attacks by the unprecedented Fulani herdsmen and bandits with a heavy toll on human lives and property.

Surprisingly, it was observed that Fulani herders who were originally perceived friendly in their nomadic activities were recently armed with sophisticated weapons by Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) to employ surprise deadly attacks on the farmers and targeted communities mostly at a time the communities are unprepared, especially in the midnight or on Sundays when people are assumed to have gone to sleep or to church. Thus, killing people indiscriminately and burning houses and looting properties (Michael, Inyang & Ukpong). Apparently, these increasing deadly attacks on the innocent citizens of the country have degenerated frequently in the southern states, with more deadly attacks in states like Rivers, Abia, Imo, Ebonyi and Enugu, in the southeast; and Ondo, Ekiti and Ondo in the southwest.

Notably, it is estimated that Nigeria loses about \$14 billion annually to these clashes in trying to compensate the victims. For instance, in February, 2017, about 300 people were killed and about 7,000 persons displaced in four communities in just one local government area of Agatu, in Benue state (Amaza, 2016), with approximately N575, 000,000 used for re-establishing the affected areas. These are resources which would have been used for the economic development of the general society, now being used for compensation of the victims as against its budgeted purposes. Similarly, the over 300 killed in the process were largely farmers who would have directly or indirectly contributing to the economic growth of the country through their agricultural produce.

Similarly, banditry according to Anyadike (2021) was an offshoot or a derivative of armed herdsmen originated in 2014 in the North-West Nigeria, particularly in the states like Zamfara, Kaduna, Niger, Sokoto, Kebbi and Katsina, who intensified its activities between 2017 to 2018 to include cattle rustling, raping, kidnapping for ransom, sexual violence and killings amongst others in the area. In the recent time, banditry activities in the aforementioned northwestern states have been particularly worrisome and nightmare, as the attacks intensified, thus leading to the extrajudicial killings of about 1,100 people in



2018, over 2,200 in 2019 and 1,600 between January and June 2020, with about 247,000 people being displaced also. Worryingly, after the first ever mass kidnapping of about 276 school children in 2014 by a well-known terrorist group—Boko Haram, therefore, banditry activities have also been centered on killings, raping and kidnappings. For instance, it was observed that over 300 school girls were kidnapped in Jangebe, Zamfara state and another 300 school boys in Kankara, Kastina State in the same year; and over 110 schoolgirls in Government Science School, Dapchi, Yobe state (BBC NEWS, 2020). Unfortunately, each of these kidnaps were targeted for ransom, for instance, according to Shihui (2021), Nigeria has spent at least US\$11 million to kidnappers between January 2016 and March 2020 for the release of the kidnapped, while an uncountable millions of dollars have also been lavished on the security operatives and repented bandits. This no doubt undermines the socio-economic and national development of the country in general. This is because no investor either local or either foreign can confidently invest in such security prone environment for fear of been kidnapped and killed.

### ***Sponsorship of banditry-herdsmen in Nigeria***

Conflict of interest amongst the political elites in Nigeria, particularly in the northern region appears the

foundational pillar upon which the current wave of insecurity in the region persists on one end. The interrogation between the intersection of illegal mining also the second root cause of rural banditry and other forms of violence and local conflicts in the North Western states, with particular reference to Kaduna, Katsina and Zamfara states on the other end. This is so because some locals in the major affected areas of Kastina, Kaduna, and Zamfara states who maintained on conditions of anonymity that the present security menace of rural banditry is fallout of illegal mining in the zone (Ogbonnaya, 2020). And further contend that:

Those who sponsor illegal mining also sponsor rural banditry and cattle rustling in mining communities in order to create conflict situations for local cattle breeders. Such conflicts lead to the sacking of villages and the displacement of local populations, which creates opportunities for illegal miners to operate (Ogbonnaya, 2020, p. 4).

The above argument firmly validated the very position by Nigeria's Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, who noted that 'banditry, kidnapping, killing and cattle rustling were largely sponsored by the illegal miners in the state'. The minister added, the miners were fuelling instability in the state to pave the way for their illegal activities (Ogbonnaya, 2020).

Therefore, it is observed that the popular contestations between the political leaders of north over the control

of mining fields that resulted in the sponsorship of illegal mining thus using banditry and herdsmen as a possible means of achieving their aims. Upon this is the saying that sponsors of illegal mining enjoy the support and protection of some state governments, on the conceptions that they seem to be above the law (Ubi, 2017). Thus, the government sponsorship of banditry is no longer a hidden fact. Akin to this argument, Nigeria's Minister of Mines and Steel Development, Olamilekan Adegbite, has identified 'Nigerians in high positions of authority as the prominent actors behind the sponsorship of banditry in the northwest (Ogbonnaya, 2020). In a similar argument, Mr. Ifeanyi Ezedinma, the spokesperson of a political group I Stand With Buhari at news conference in Abuja threatened to expose the sponsors of terrorism and banditry in Nigeria, with one month to denounce the acts as such is a sabotage to the country (Sahara Reporters, 2021). The group further maintained that they are in possession of the list containing the names of the sponsors of the groups, from the state governors down to political influencers, youth organization, as well as clandestine.

Shockingly, as the sponsors of these evil are known, so also the perpetrators. For instance, the figure below showing an open interface or public transaction with the leader of bandits—Turji.



**Figure 1** Government cum Community Leaders in an Open Transaction with Leader Bandits in Zamfara State

According to Sahara Reporters, the leader, Turji whose father was arrested by security agencies as a security measure of getting him arrested, threatened to raid and sack the entire villages of Kurya, Keta, Kware, Badarawa, Marisuwa, Maberaya, if his father is not released to celebrate the upcoming Sallah at home, and he would also ensure that many other people spend the period without their families.

Similarly, it was also observed that the same highly placed leaders, politicians and groups who sponsor banditry and other forms of violence also sponsor herdsmen. For instance, according to the Aare Onakakanfo of Yoruba land, Iba Gani Adams during his condolence visit to the leader of the Pan Yoruba socio-cultural organization, Afenifere, Chief Reuben Fasaranti over the killing of his daughter, Mrs Funke

Olakunrin by Fulani herdsmen at Kajola village along Benin-Ore road. Specifically, argued that the sponsorship of Fulani herdsmen are not far from some highly placed individuals, because according him the herders cannot afford to buy an AK 47 rifle of about N1 million with many bullets (Sun News, 2019). In a similar narrative, Oluwajuyitan (2018) contends that if truly the herders cannot possibly afford an AK-47 rifle worth about N1 million, hence, the their umbrella group of Development Association and member of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association's (MACBAN) which sees their constitutional are most likely the sponsorship of the incessant herdsmen attacks all the country in order to thrive business of cattle rearing.

***Historical perspective, causes and effects of banditry in the North-west Nigeria***

Etymological, the concept of rural banditry is not a new phenomenon in global history, as it was reportedly traced in the ancient Greek City States, Medieval Rome and ancient China between the periods of 15<sup>th</sup> century (Butts, 2016). But was also found in satellite areas of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans in the periods between 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, and was flourishly extended to 21<sup>st</sup> century as the Latin America economic frontier expanded (Cassia, 2019). In Africa for instance, rural banditry is

palpable and formidable in many countries, particularly in the West Africa where countries like Nigeria have recorded some devastating cases in the last couple of years. The current wave of banditry, armed violence and its broader group of herdsmen is on the increase, especially in the Northwestern Nigeria--one of the most troubled geo-political zones in terms of insecurity in the recent period. The concept of rural banditry is conventionally conceived as armed violence with the motive of criminal intention to steal, plunder and waste community resources, with the use of either local weapons or sophisticated firearms in achieving its criminal objective (Attah, Sambo, Sule, Bello & Saragih, 2021).

This unethical engagement is economically driven or motivated as means of livelihood or business enterprise in the zone due to large deposit of mineral resource (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019). And has diversified into armed robbery, kidnapping, cattle rustling and village raid as in the case in Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto, and Zamfara in the recent time, consequently, leading to the wonton deaths and displacement of the innocent citizens of the areas. Unfortunately, they often settled in fortified village environments and forests from where they plan, organize and carry out their criminal activities (Okoli, 2019). By implication, they are blood-related members of the same villages and

communities who are victims of the circumstance, and who often cried to government for assistance.

Meanwhile, Attah, Sambo, Sule, Bello & Saragih (2021) contend that the central and thrust to the drivers of armed violence in Northwestern Nigeria are not limited to the ungovernable nature of the zone, remote and arid nature of some locations in the zone with minimal or total absence of governance in the entire area. This following the prevailing poor indices of socio-economic situations of zone which have been abetting the precarious security situation in the area. Furthermore, other factors include zone are porous borders, climatic change, trans-national movement and connectivity of armed groups in West Africa, poorly equipped and ill-motivated security personnel, low level of intelligence gathering and presumed invisible hands of powerful supporters (Okoli, 2019). Worthy to note that this armed banditry business started as a localised conflict between farmers and herders, but escalated to insurmountable armed violence group, posing serious threat to both national and regional security in Nigeria in particular, and other West African countries in general. This which became so complex between the periods, 2014-2019, with serious economic and political implications in the run-up to the 2019 general elections in the zone (Suleiman, 2019). With daily routine incessant deaths and other

collateral damages in the affected geopolitical zone. Akin to the above, ACAPS Nigeria (2020) observed that about 1,586 lives have been lost to rural banditry activities and 318,000 residents displaced in the northwest alone between 2017-2019. Furthermore, Attah, Sambo, Sule, Bello & Saragih (2021) worrisomely noted that the rapid growing wave of banditry began in 2011 in form of mild farmer-herder conflict in the Northwest, but became intensified since 2017 with increasing destruction of lives and property and disrupting other economic activities in the 35 out of 92 local government areas in the four states of Kaduna, Zamfara, Borno and Katsina Northwest.

The escalation of banditry continues due to the activities of illegal mining of gold in the area, which has also pitched the armed groups against the Nigerian state, with great diverstating effects on the innocent citizens of the area. For instance, according to a research report in March, 2020, which indicated that more than 210,000 people have been internally displaced and over 35,000 refugees have crossed communal borders of Nigeria into Niger Republic between 2017-2019 (ACAPS Nigeria, 2020). Then, the ungovernable spaces such as Kamuku, Birnin Gwari, Rugu, Kamara, Kunduma and Sububu forests became their operating havens from where they launch attacks

on the surrounding or neighbouring communities, through the metropolis of the zone. Apart from the attacks of napping and illegally tapping of the gold deposit in the zone, other form of their activities include the following—cattle rustling, incessant killing of women and children, raping, and kidnapping for ransom amongst others (Suleiman, 2019). The aforementioned activities according to Attah, Sambo, Sule, Bello & Saragih (2021) had seen unprepared daily deaths of more than 6,319 people between 2011 and 2018, and over 190,340 people displaced in Zamfara state alone. In the same vein, about over 2,000 people were killed and 500 communities destroyed, with over 33,000 people displaced in Kastina State (Kola, 2020). Furthermore, to prove how diverstating and rapidly expanding banditry is, between January and December, 2019 alone:

Over 1,058 people were killed in Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto and Niger States, and over 10,000 cattle were rustled, 2,688 hectares of arable farming land was lost due to displacement and forceful migration. About 10,000 houses were destroyed and over 147,800 vehicles were lost to the bandits in Zamfara State alone. And about 4,000 people were internally displaced in Kaduna State with scores of thousands of death between November, 2019 and March, 2020 (West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, 2020; Hamrouni, 2020) (cited in Attah, Sambo, Sule, Bello & Saragih, 2021, p. 37).

Furthermore, its adverse, the extent and manner in which banditry activities affected lives of

the people in Northwestern Nigeria in particular abound. For instance, this led to a serious humanitarian crisis due to the attacks on one end, and with the displacement of more than 300,000 people as observed above, most of who are farmers, there is a threat to food security on the other end, as the farmers no longer go to their normal daily farming activities. Similarly, the halted commercial activities in the affected areas have not only crashed several businesses and small scale enterprises, but also led to loss of jobs, and increasing untold poverty in the area and the country in general. With women and children, the most vulnerable in the society are been left without support due to the death of their husbands and fathers—bread winners.

#### *Socio-economic implication of banditry-herdsmen activities in Nigeria*

The menace of banditry-Fulani-Herdsman appears to have dire implications for socio-economic development in the states attacked in particular and Nigeria in general. For instance, in the states where bandits and herdsmen attack entire community, killed and raped their women and daughters, destroy their farms and other properties, this automatically plug-away their economic and social opulence back by several steps (Obi, Chinweze & Onyejebu, 2018). Similarly, they further noted that apart from the

destroyed properties, socio-economic life in those states in particular is usually grounded to a halt as people live in suspense and in fear, thus, could not freely go about their farming and other socio-economic activities for fear of being killed and raped in the process. Therefore, the socio-economic implication of banditry-herdsmen activities cannot be overemphasized as agricultural and other social activities which supposedly should be the bedrock of the socio-economic development of Nigeria appear to have been hampered upon. Similarly, the banditry-herdsmen activities have cost the country huge financial expenditure on yearly basis, as a substantial part of the country's budget are often been spent on the compensation of families who lost their relations to the banditry-Fulani herdsmen attacks and farmers clashes (Ajibefun, 2018). Furthermore, Ajibefun maintained that a huge amount of money is also been spent on weapons and ammunition acquisition so as to equip the military and other security operatives saddled with the responsibility to handle and curtail such menace in the society. Worryingly, all these seem to have overtly or covertly affected Nigeria's economy on one end, and caused shortage food and famine on the other hand, as famers no longer go to farms for fears of being raped and attacked in the process.

Similarly, Michael, Inyang and Ukpong (2017) speaking from the social point of view observed that the attack by bandits and herdsmen has created social dislocation and continuous suspicion among the Fulani extraction in particular in the society in general, especially, groups within the areas attacked. Fulani herdsmen who originally considered being friendly are now looked upon as social stigma as people are no longer comfortable with the presence of herdsmen who are generally undertaking their legitimate nomadic business because of this incessant undefined attacks on fellow human. This however, battered the social integration and cohesion which had often existed among herdsmen and residents, as most communities no longer welcome their presence around them (Obi, Chinweze and Onyejebu, 2018).

Pathetically, herdsmen who were previously allowed to join community associations and relate with members of the community, and equally contribute to the community and socio-economic development of their settled communities are currently and strongly denied the privilege of joining such associations where they exist. This inevitably created social dislocation amongst the peoples of Nigeria. For instance, some communities, particularly the attacked communities vehemently resolved that no member of the

community shall provide land for herdsmen to graze their herds (Michael, Inyang & Ukpog, 2017).

Consequently, as numerous farming communities have been displaced due to banditry-herdsmen activities in Nigeria, unemployment which already was an issue of great concern escalated also along with declining food production in the society (Afolabi, 2018). For instance, the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (2018) estimated that the number of food insecure people in Nigeria stood at about 11 million as at August 2017, with higher projected increase in no distance time. The above holds worrying implications on economic, social and security-related fronts in the country. In consonance, Afolabi (2018) also observed that the economic impact of the strife is multi-faceted, as the cattle industry is underperforming due to lack of mutually partnership between farmers and herdsmen in agricultural sphere of the country. Furthermore, this hampered the 1.58 percent contribution of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) yearly by cattle production, and 22.19 per cent contribution by crop production (Obi, Chinweze and Onyejebu, 2018). According to the Nigerian Cattle Industry Report (2018), the Nigerian cattle market currently generates only US\$6.8 billion of a potential US\$20bn per year

due to persisted strife between herdsmen and its sister banditry and farmers in the society.

Another adverse effect of banditry-herdsmen activities is the obvious case of threat to Nigeria's food security. For instance, according to the Food and Agricultural Organization (2018) about 25 per cent of Nigeria's population has been pegged as severely insecure in the recent time due to the cattle destruction of farms and crops across the country. Most of the communities in the South-East, South-West and Middle-Belt where the attacks took place are profoundly regarded as the 'food basket' of the country (Obi, Chinweze and Onyejebu, 2018) due to their vaunt in food production. The Middle-Belt and other parts of Southern Nigeria have traditionally been endowed with agricultural produce and are regarded as Nigeria's most agriculturally productive regions. For instance, crops such as yam, cassava, rice, soy beans and guinea corn, amongst others which are grown in the rich soils of these areas hold the key to Nigeria's quest for self-sustainability in food production (Afolabi, 2018). Professionally, and based on the forgoing reality, it may not be overstatement to extrapolate that the current pastoral conflict raging across key Middle-Belt states has more economic implications to the country's socio-economic development than the conflict in North East and Western Nigeria, as many farmers have

been forcefully inhibited to cultivate and harvested for the fears of been unjustly attacked in the process. Consequent upon this, trade and commerce have suffered tremendously, resulting in further pauperization of Nigerians and even government's revenue has been dwindled as well on one end. Social activities particularly in the crisis prone areas are very poor due to fear of the unknown, and many of the best brains and man power have fled for fear of either being kidnapped, killed or maimed on the end. Therefore, this not only resulting in great inflation as currently witnessed in the country, but also undermine national development in the country.

#### ***Government responses to banditry-herdsmen attacks in Nigeria***

In response to the current wave of banditry-herdsmen activities and its menace in the country, especially in the northwest. The government whose primary responsibility is to protect the lives and properties of its citizens suspended all mining activities in the State and in the zone at large, as its prompt attempt to arrest the situation and restore normalcy in the country. Through, there were some indisputable allegations of government sponsorship of the bandits through illegal mining of the deposited gold in the area by cabals—government functionaries in order to divert government's attention to the security situation rather

than the illicit mining (Okoli, 2019). However, never deterred by such allegations, instead, the government has so far been pre-occupied with every sense of security responsibility to curb banditry challenges in the Northwest geo-political zone, with the establishment of some code-named security outfits in the zone. As observed by Attah, Sambo, Sule, Bello and Saragih (2021) that between January and April, 2019, a number of operations were executed by the government security operatives in Northwestern Nigeria, which include the following-- Operation Harbin Kunama, Operation Diran Mikiya and Operation Puff Adder. Furthermore, the government also spent billions of Naira in the process as amnesty programmes for those who were ready to submit to the peace and order of the state.

However, it is pertinent to note that despite the ongoing military operations and programmes in the region, many communities, farmlands and settlements have remained deserted due to the trauma associated with their past ordeal. To justify the fears of the deserted communities, armed banditry dramatically continues to be on the increase in Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina and Kaduna irrespective of Government's military response in mitigating banditry in Northwest even in a more diverstating dimension. The situation which almost if not validated the initial allegations of



government sponsorship of banditry, but has raised a lot of concerns about the effectiveness and methods of counter armed banditry approach in the zone. Furthermore, the government launched some other measures, such as:

The ban on the use of motorbikes, were put in place, because they are often used by the bandits in the course of their attacks...In addition, the federal and state governments in the affected region attempted to mitigate the crisis through some peace-building initiatives, such as lockdown and inter-state travel bans, dialogues, amnesty, the use of traditional rulers, community policing, community watch dogs, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and intelligence gathering (International Crisis Group, 2020; West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, 2020) (cited in. Attah, Sambo, Sule, Bello and Saragih, 2021, p. 40).

Similarly, the military further intensified their campaigns through air strikes on the volatile locations of the bandits between June and July, 2020, which resulted in ever success of killing of about 300 bandits and some of their camps were destroyed and their logistics shattered (Orjinmo, 2020). More so, the recorded success motivated in embarking on combing the haven forest for the remaining bandits (Market Watch culled from Xinhua News, 2020).

In the same vein, the government also has launched several security programmes in curtailing the menace of herders and other security challenges by groups such as cultism, banditry, vandalism, amongst others. The states government in partnership with the security

agencies and federal government, community leaders and stakeholders launched series of security operation under different code names, and vigilante--informal community policing in the State, particularly in the highly volatile areas of the country (Ladan & Iguda, 2019; and Mudasiru & Fatai, 2020).

Therefore, the result of the above government process and programmes in curtailing security threat of banditry-herdsmen shall be a reference point for further research. This is because if the government through security operatives is genuinely committed to their security responsibility of ending banditry-herdsmen security challenge through the various aforementioned process and programmes, the results shall be positively seen. But if politics is a preferred stack as in the case of Boko Haram insurance, observers and researchers watching as well.

### ***Conclusion/recommendation***

Recent study on security has proven that security is an imperative aspect of human life, therefore has formed the mainstream of global debate due to its importance to the growth of global economy. This is not exception in the case of Africa and Nigeria in particular as one the globally emerging economy, projected to dominating the global economy in the nearest future

after China due to its rapid growth in the recent time (Ubi, 2017).

However, banditry-herdsmen activities ranging from pillaging, raping, killing, destruction of farm and kidnapping for ransom amongst others in the recent time thus constitute serious threat and challenge to socio-economic development of Nigeria. This is because, the herdsmen-banditry activities of grazing and destroying farmland, which often result in clash and conflicts between the two parties leading to the extrajudicial killings of the defenseless farmers constitute a serious threat to socio-economic growth of the country. As many farmers no longer move freely to engage in their farming activities for fear of been unjustly attacked, raped and kidnapped in the process, thus resulting not only in food insecurity and famine, but also great inflation as currently witnessed in the country.

Therefore, the study hereby recommend among other things that:

- Government should step up in its primary responsibility of providing and protecting its citizenry.
  - It is very needful to disarm the armed herdsmen.
- A special security squad should be established to monitor and checkmate the unconstitutional activities of the herdsmen in the society. And death penalty if found guilty
- A supranational authority should be established where both the herdsmen and farmers can willingly submit their total loyalties.
  - A window of dialogue utmost importance between the aggrieved parties within the government setting, community youths etc.

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