THE THRILLING TALES OF ARMED BANDITRY IN NIGERIA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Armed banditry in Nigeria is a phenomenon marked by violent crime in rural and urban areas. The paper, through historical and descriptive methods of research, explores the thrilling tales of armed banditry in Nigeria. Nigeria's complex history, marked by diverse ethnicities and cultures, sets the stage for understanding the roots of armed banditry. The activities of armed banditry evolved from their early instances during the pre-colonial period and through various regimes up to the present day. This paper argued that while modern technology, socio-economic factors, and political instability have contributed to its resurgence, historical influences and undercurrents remain essential in understanding the phenomenon. It was discovered in the paper that the new structures imposed by British colonial rule replaced governance systems and traditional means of conflict resolution and social order. This development provided a fertile ground for the emergence of criminal gangs and undesirable elements that continued to plague the nation. However, the paper recommends that the Federal Government should provide jobs and other basic amenities in every region. This is will checkmate the menace of banditry in the region.

Keywords: Banditry, Armed, Poverty, Economic, Ethnicity, Regimes

Introduction

Armed robbery and banditry in Nigeria is a time-honoured phenomenon: a violent form of crime that has metamorphosed over time from the earlier days of the pre-colonial era through various regimes up until now. It is necessary to investigate the etiology of armed banditry against the background of Nigeria's complex history and diverse ethnicities and cultures. A related precedent of this violent form of exploitation, which foreshadowed the repetitive modes of contemporary banditry, can be found in the activities of the infamous slave raiders during the pre-colonial period (Ogunleye, 2021). With the British colonial administration came new frameworks and governing institutions, and the traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution and social order began to break down. This absence of a legitimate authority made fertile soil for crime gangs, starting from the early twentieth century.

The socio-economic dislocations engendered by colonial policies devastated local economies and produced a class of dispossessed people who subsequently resorted to banditry to survive. For example, the unification of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 highlighted the differences between the North and the South, resulting in strong competition for resources (Falola, 1998). Such historical contextualization places armed banditry not simply as a recent criminal act but as an extension of decades-long trajectories of violence, oppression, and resistance.

When we grapple with Nigeria's more recent historical periods, the cyclical nature of armed banditry becomes clear. The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) had left the North especially destabilised and lawless. Economic decline in the post-war period and widespread corruption only deepened society's wounds. The stage was thus set for the emergence of gangs of criminals who took advantage of the socio-political turbulence to engage in armed robbery and abduction. The shift to democracy in the late 1990s did nothing to assuage the factors that led to banditry; instead, it reshaped the playing field. Seeking power over the resource, political leaders were complicit in a world where militia groups could flourish. Increasingly turning to armed robbery and kidnappings as desperate actions and forms of protest, such militias, made up of local youths who had been disenfranchised by the state, flourished (Nwanosike, 2020). This evolution shows that armed banditry in Nigeria cannot be de-linked from deeper socio-political undercurrents but is rather symptomatic of deeper systemic failures.

The upsurge of armed banditry can be attributed to several factors, among which is the socio-economic environment. The search for greener pastures and the rural-to-urban migration tend to precipitate economic stagnation in rural communities with an increasing cohort of disenfranchised youths. Nigeria currently is among the countries that have the highest youth unemployment rate (34.9%), and also serves as fertilizer for an insecurity breeding ground (African Development Bank Group, 2021). Uneducated youths are also less likely to find legitimate work, leading them towards crime.

Armed banditry has become "terrorism", which is exacerbated by the advent of "modern technology" Social media and mobile phones enable bandits to orchestrate and execute attacks with greater effectiveness. Seizing the opportunities offered by advances in technology, these groups can communicate quickly, keep ahead of the authorities and create terror through high-profile acts of violence. A well-known example is the use of social media channels to plan kidnappings for ransom. Examples of how criminal gangs have successfully publicised their exploits to enhance their reputation show the effect technology is having on modern banditry (BBC News 2021). The presence of weapons has emboldened these groups, allowing them to engage in violent confrontations, not just with police forces but also with rival gangs. As reported countless times in the press, the failure of the government to live up to its duty has left many rural areas subject to the mercy of these armed formations (The Guardian Nigeria, 2023).

Nigeria's response to banditry has been criticized as a misinterpretation of the causes of banditry. Though military operations have been used to counter armed groups, the government has largely neglected the social problems that have given rise to banditry. Resistance against foreign military intervention has been noted previously and has been heard more forcefully in the Middle East in recent times, as noted by Amnesty International: "The efforts for military interventions have often relied on military means without adequately considering the socio-

economic and political context, leading to a deterioration of relations between local communities and security forces and a cycle of violence" (Amnesty International 2022).

Strategies that include engaging the leaders of bandit groups also have a controversial record. Amnesty International, for example, criticises such approaches for inadvertently legitimising criminal enterprises. The absence of an overarching long-term plan to eradicate banditry demonstrates that Nigeria's state response to the threat of armed banditry is reactive and fails to establish a conducive environment to which policies address root causes of the threat, as well as eliminate the enemies of the state while breaking the vicious cycle of violence and insecurity in Nigeria.

The socio-political environment in Nigeria has played a huge role in the rise of banditry. Colonial rule combined different ethnicities, laid the foundation for an overwhelmingly complex governing structure that led to regional favouritism (Akinwunmi, 2020). In the wake of colonial rule being largely rejected in the 1960s, Nigeria was consumed by a civil war — the Biafran conflict — that left a legacy of distrust and marginalisation that would later boil over into violent crime. Political instability and corruption have led to socio-economic crises that have created large sections of the population disenfranchised and desperate, and thus created a fertile ground for banditry. It is impossible to separate the economics from armed banditry. The United Nations Development Programme (2021) notes that there is a link between poverty and criminality, particularly in Nigeria, as a large number of its citizens are living below the poverty line, which causes several souls to get into the prisons of criminal enterprises. The failure of the Nigerian government to provide even the most basic of its functions, like education and jobs, has only compounded the cycle of violence and lawlessness (Human Rights Watch, 2022). In parts of the country such as Zamfara and Katsina states, young people, most with no means of livelihood, are easily drawn into the world of banditry, where they can perceive a means to quick financial execution.

Both industrialization and urbanization have been instrumental in transforming established hierarchies and social frameworks within communities. Young people are migrating to cities and towns at an alarming rate, leaving many rural communities vulnerable, and the breakdown of traditional governance structures and law and order creates a vacuum that is exploited by the bandits. The thriving communal systems of yesteryears now lie dormant, creating cracks for criminal groups to thrive in these weakened states (Onuoha, 2018).

The absence of effective governance and law enforcement has compounded the problem. Banditry cannot be successfully fought, as there is corruption within security agencies and within governmental bureaucracy. Citizens often view the police and military as opponents rather than defenders, further distancing them from help. In addition, the uncontrolled arms trafficking increases the access of bandit groups to increasingly sophisticated weaponry,

emboldening their actions against vulnerable communities (Small Arms Survey 2021). Most of all, we must not underestimate the mutually reinforcing relationship that has developed between populations and armed groups. In many cases, bandits are viewed not as far-flung criminals, but as community members who can deliver protection or services in return for loyalty or support (Okoli & Sani, 2020). In this way, we have a paradoxical dynamic where communities constantly switch between victimhood and complicity, rendering the phenomenon of banditry even more complex and less easily remedied. As we analyse causes of armed banditry, one of the underpinnings of this systemic destruction is socio-cultural narratives that fuel its sustainability. Traditional notions of honour, revenge, and community support all legitimise violent responses to grievances, and a violent culture driven by tribalistic loyalties and moral codes may glorify acts of retaliation (Naij 2019). To some, people who are engaged in acts of banditry were exalted or seen as courageous enough to stand against a perceived injustice; thereby normalizing criminal behaviour (Shuaibu, 2022).

Educational programmes and vocational training can provide alternatives to banditry, but socio-economic development must be prioritised. In addition, fair distribution of resources is vital in a nation where the few are always richer. Community engagement and establishing trust between the citizens and the security agencies are key initial steps to developing a workable structure for peace and harmony (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020). It is also crucial to address the problem of small arms and light weapons. An increase in the control of the inflow of arms to the region would impede the abilities of armed bands, so the Nigerian government must step up on securing its border and work with neighbouring states in controlling the arms trade (Mali et al., 2020). Enhancing law enforcement training and promoting transparency would also help restore public confidence and motivate the public to cooperate more with security agencies.

Causes of   Armed Banditry in Nigeria

There are numerous factors that contribute to armed banditry in Nigeria. Some of these factors will be itemised and explained below.

The Economic Fallout: The economic dimensions of armed banditry predominantly materialize with the destruction of assets on a large scale. A large segment of Nigeria's economy has become a prime target for bandits looking to loot livestock and crops. The attacks are not isolated incidents — they are organized campaigns that have caused thousands of farmers to flee and destroyed agricultural facilities, according to a report from the International Crisis Group. This displacement has catastrophic implications for food security in Nigeria, where approximately 60% of the population derives its livelihood from agriculture (World Bank, 2022). Food production has crashed, driving up prices for core commodities and leaving countless families to fall into poverty. The impact is reversed not only for those impacted on the ground but also for urban-dwellers at the mercy of a rural food supply. Higher prices from scarcity lead to loss of nutritional viability, which affects public health on macro scales. What

was once a steady table is now a struggle, with the spectre of malnutrition looming, especially among vulnerable groups, including children and pregnant women (UNICEF, 2023).

Another major sore spot is employment, which has been sorely affected by banditry. In violence-ridden areas, businesses are largely doomed. Security improvements will encourage investment and entrepreneurship. Desperation leads many young people not only to crime but to join armed groups rather than seek legal employment (IOM, 2020). This establishes a cycle of devastation where increasing numbers of people are caught up within the system of violence and/or crime, and the social contracts that bind communities become frayed.

Targeting the Structures of Society: Armed banditry has social development implications beyond economic hardship. In many impacted communities, trust has entirely eroded. Close-knit communities become divided, but neighbours turn on each other in a fight for their lives and their property. In banditry-afflicted space, education, which is a key pillar for any society, is badly crushed. Schools, once sacred spaces of hope and learning, lie vacant or repurposed for security personnel. Parents who fear for their children's safety sometimes choose not to send them to school. Consequently, literacy rates fall, and the prospects of these children grow dimmer by the day. An estimated 2.4 million children are out of school in northern Nigeria (NERDC, 2022), but this number, like many statistics, has gotten worse over time in tandem with the rise of armed banditry. These children, being denied education, have a grim future, continuing the chain of poverty and violence. In addition, the psychological cost of armed banditry is immeasurable. Survivors of assaults often suffer trauma, anxiety and depression. These are compounded by a lack of mental health support, and the communities fighting for survival have little or no resources to tackle the mental trauma left by violence.

Socio-Economic Factors and their Implication: It is important to delve into the socio-economic fabric of the regions in the north to unearth the drivers of banditry. From faces lined with bitterness to hands worn out from fading hope, the scars of poverty can be seen in every one of the millions of people in northern Nigeria who live under the crushing backdrop of an economy on the brink of collapse, widespread illiteracy rates and pervasive feelings of disenfranchisement. Despite its incalculable youth demographic, the absence of tangible job prospects has forced a majority into the clutches of criminal enterprises. The pursuit of banditry preys on young people and provides them with the temptations of money and power, taking away their focus from academics and moral purpose.

Economically, the northern region has been faced with a vicious cycle of economic challenges, with minimal access to key resources and infrastructural progress. The situation is severe as a result, the younger generations are robbed of the skills and capabilities that could lead to positive change. The interplay between poverty and insecurity is catalytic, and one commonly

feeds the other: poor communities become more vulnerable to criminal influences (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2020).

The Role of Governance and Security Forces: The cyclical nature of banditry is partly rooted in the Nigerian government's responses to it. The situation is complicated by a lack of trust between local communities and government authorities, which can further fuel tensions and encourage violence. In numerous cases, the security apparatus is viewed as an external entity, enforcing stability, yet incapable of safeguarding the individuals they are meant to assist. (Adebayo, A. 2022). Often, militarised responses have exacerbated tensions so much that communities resisting their reign of terror have become the target of bandits' reprisals. Such regions of the country have been plagued with reports of bandit attacks in Zamfara and Katsina states, where previous administrations seem over over-run by passivity in finding a solution to the menace. It has been a reactive rather than proactive environment by the government, and so banditry thrives when there is no real rescue in site, communities easily find themselves in the cycle of violence unable to muster effective short to long term solutions to stem the tide. (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

Community and Coping Dynamics: Despite the overwhelming banditization, the tenacity of local people is remarkable. Every village has its own coping arrangements with the aim of lessening the effects of violence and restoring a feeling of security. For instance, community-based initiatives have developed, with locals uniting to create vigilante groups trying to repel bandit attacks. This kind of grassroots initiatives demonstrates a praiseworthy spirit of community solidarity and self-reliance, albeit sometimes with some unintended collateral damage, such as inter-community clashes (Bello, M. 2021). While enhancing local community capacity to self-defend is paramount, it must go hand in hand with the developmental projects. The report highlights the importance of an integrated approach in addressing insecurity through education, poverty reduction, and engagement with local leaders. (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). Understanding that banditry does not only stem from criminal volition, but from systemic disenfranchisement is key to breaking the cycle. Such multi-pronged approaches that work on the different levels of socio-economic development, governance, and self-attenuation may offer transformative outcomes. The scourge of armed banditry has, in turn, continued to rise to the fore, casting a shadow across the socio-economic landscape of the different regions of the country, especially the northern areas.

Central to the crisis is a constellation of causes that have been festering for years. One historical element is the widespread poverty that grips so many northern parts of the world. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, more than 40 percent of Nigeria's population was living in poverty in 2022, with northern states disproportionately affected ("Poverty in Nigeria," National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). The poverty-bred desperation is what drives young men into

banditry, it is compelling because apart from the school dropout, they really have a narrow opportunity for legitimate work in society.

The second major factor behind the growth of banditry is the widespread availability of small arms and light weapons in the region. There has been an increase in weapon circulation in Nigeria since the late 20th Century, due to the political instability in the Sahel region. This flow has become increasingly easy for criminal gangs to access. A separate report by the Small Arms Survey points to Nigeria's porous borders as one of the key enablers for arms trafficking, helping further create a breeding ground for banditry ("Armed Violence in Nigeria," Small Arms Survey, 2022). What unfolds instead is a cat-and-mouse game between state forces and bandits, creating just the conditions to fuel the crisis.

The other root cause is the collapse of the social structures and institutions in the region. Conventional leadership, which used to offer at least an illusion of security and a sense of community, has weakened, both through political neglect and the doings of bandits. Across many rural areas, the authority of elder councils has declined, creating a leadership vacuum that armed factions have filled.

Nigeria's northern regions are among the hardest hit by changing weather patterns, which have led to skirmishes over dwindling resources like water and farmland. Farmers and herders have long struggled over these resources, a clash that has grown more severe in recent years as droughts have become more severe. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, these climate-induced conflicts often turn into violence ("The Climate Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria", FAO, 2020).

Corruption and misgovernance are problematic in Nigeria generally, but particularly in the north. The state funds, which ought to have been spent on creating infrastructure, reducing poverty and boosting education, often get diverted by corrupt officials, leading to communities devoid of development. Since corruption has been known to have adverse impacts on security, it is no surprise that a recent report by Transparency International, which has been in the forefront of keeping records on this issue, was cited for its emphasis on Nigeria's perennial struggles with the pervasive ignobility whose consequences has been dastardly on security ("Corruption Perceptions Index," Transparency International, 2022).

According to The World Bank (2020), more than 200 million people in Nigeria live in extreme poverty, and most of them depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Many of the banditry communities include agrarian communities that are prone to banditry, where farmers cannot go to farm due to violence, intimidation and coercion. The impact of banditry on food insecurity and rising prices is seen especially in states like Katsina, Zamfara, and Kaduna, where agricultural production was not only reduced, but where food prices were reported to have

increased by 150% in some regions within the last few years (UN OCHA, 2021). These crises have cascading effects: the displacement of farmers who flee their lands creates new residency in the status of refugees, which leads to further hopelessness.

The psychological impact of living under constant threat cannot be overestimated. Families fear bandits invading under the cover of darkness, forcing many to leave their homes in search of safety in nearby towns or cities. It is not only fear for losing what little we possess, but fear for their lives" (Amnesty International, 2020). Such revelations speak to a deeper, menacing core where the glue that brings communities together and under threat is fraying.

The culture of impunity is also widely known. Armed groups operate with little fear of retaliation, emboldened by the inability of local law enforcement agency to effectively intervene. This resulted in an environment where criminality is not only rampant but is also normalised, as residents have had to learn to live their lives with bandits as part of the realities of their existence. This has a dramatic impact on social networks, and trust among members of a community erodes, resulting in isolation and disillusionment.

The media also contributes significantly to the perceived security situation in Nigeria. When violence does occur, the accompanying sensationalism can create an impression of the community that belies the reality. Yes, these are events that need to be reported to keep both the public informed and to help hold those responsible accountable, but the danger is telling the story of these regions through this violence, when the story of countless people and communities is one of strength and resilience. Journalistic reporting needs to walk the tight rope, raising local voices and solutions, while demanding systemic changes that address the underlying causes of armed banditry (Ene, 2022).

Shadows of blood and suffocation are the tears of the armed banditry gloves. To address the crisis, many grassroots initiatives have sprung up. Local leaders, risking their lives, have begun coming together, joining forces to create vigilante groups to protect their communities. These organisations, despite encountering obstacles, are working to protect livelihoods and ensure a sense of security. Working with NGOs, education and resources are being directed at these communities in an attempt to tackle at least some of the socio-economic conditions that underpin banditry.

One of these initiatives is the "Community Police" strategy, which seeks to improve local security through citizen involvement in crime prevention strategies. It also stresses collaboration between the community and law enforcement, creating an environment for trust and accountability. This approach can build stronger community ties and pave the way for collaborative action against banditry. However, the success of such programmes is dependent on

sufficient resources and training support from the government and international community (Ogunsanya, 2021).

Solutions to Armed Banditry in Nigeria

The mayhem that has befallen Nigeria's northern regions at the hands of armed banditry is a tragic story that has attracted national attention. Rural communities have become particularly vulnerable to gangs, sometimes referred to as "bandits," raiding villages, displacing populations and ransacking and stealing livestock, as well as resorting to despicable acts of violence. In this context, there have been internationally numbered events, which cause an immediate demand for solutions that will restore peace and stability. When analysing how best to combat armed banditry, the common denominator would be a holistic approach that combines forming community vigilance groups, implementing stricter military or republican policing, improving socio-economic conditions in the endemic areas, and industrialising the communities as well as deploying technology.

Armed banditry in Nigeria has its origins in socioeconomic grievances, systemic corruption and political neglect and has morphed into one of Nigeria's most serious security threats. For instance, Zamfara State — formerly known for its pastoral communities — is now marked by a dire cycle of poverty and disillusionment alongside desperation (Guri, 2022). The porous borders and weak law enforcement also embolden bandits, significantly enabling them to act with impunity. Therefore, it will be helpful to take into consideration these intricacies when addressing banditry in Nigeria.

Community Engagement: The first and best way to combat armed banditry is to bring the communities into the equation of peace-building. Community policing, which encourages local engagement in the enforcement of the rule of law, can go a long way in reducing the activities of bandits. The Community Policing Strategy was introduced by the Nigeria Police Force to enable communities to participate in crime prevention and control (Nwankwo, 2021).

In addition, community dialogue has the potential to enhance understanding of the injustices that underlie banditry. Traditional leaders are sometimes very influential in their communities and can intervene to prevent violence. By engaging these leaders in discussions surrounding local security issues, authorities can coalesce toward a unified front against banditry. Regular town hall meetings allow citizens to express their concerns and recommend ways to improve their security (Shedrack, 2023).

Stronger Security Features: Banditry has graduated to a level where specialised training for law enforcement agencies is being deemed necessary. We may also be able to gain valuable resources and expertise through international collaboration. The Nigerian military has accosted neighbouring countries to hunt armed bandits and dismantle their network (Ishengoma, 2021).

Another good way is to implement mobile and static patrol units in vulnerable areas. It will ensure that citizens can feel that help can be reached even on highways and rural roads by enhancing visibility. The use of local intelligence-gathering units can make these patrols much more effective. Informants, who know the geography and sociology of their communities, can help the police avert bandit raids.

Furthermore, the need to tackle the lack of funding of security agencies must be addressed. Agencies can purchase state-of-the-art equipment and technology needed to fight armed banditry if properly financed. Implementing drones for surveillance and reconnaissance in the remote landscape can be a paradigm shift (Okon, 2022). With timely and accurate information, security forces will be in a better situation to respond to threats before they occur.

Socio-economic Development: To resolve the fundamental causative drivers of banditry, transformative socio-economic development is non-negotiable. Pervasive poverty, widespread illiteracy, and unemployment have combined to make many youths particularly vulnerable to the lure of recruitment by armed groups. By providing education initiatives and vocational opportunities, we can help lead young people away from this lifestyle.

Investing in agriculture, which is the bedrock of Nigeria's economy, can provide gainful employment. Young farmers can flourish with sufficient support and resources, rather than opting for banditry. The Anchor Borrowers' Programme established by the Central Bank of Nigeria is one such successful scheme. The programme's objective is to encourage farmers with loans and inputs, thus increasing both agricultural output and economic stability (Ogunseye, 2021).

Promoting peace through entrepreneurship can also promote long-term peace. Many, with governmental policies of business development in the north, would find financial independence, which would reduce the stress of joining them in banditry. By the same token, lending institutions and mentorship programmes should also be given the chance to provide the necessary skills and resources.

Utilising Technology: The rise of technology has opened new avenues to a lot of security challenges, and Nigeria is not left out. The integration of technology with security operations can help significantly reduce response times and improve coordination across law enforcement agencies. We can install advanced surveillance cameras to monitor the data and suspicious activities in real-time. Moreover, by investing in proper data management systems, police departments can track crime trends and patterns, which can be important in figuring out how to respond. On the other hand, mobile applications specifically designed for reporting criminal activity give citizens a direct link with law enforcement. Such involvement bolsters civilian

engagement in crime reporting and fosters a sense of ownership over safety within local communities (Chukwuma, 2023). Such technologies, therefore, even make it a matter of better training citizens to have such technology so that local security is better guarded.

Collaborative Efforts: The fight against armed banditry will have to be a multi-agency approach involving government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and local communities. NGO-led initiatives have been successful in conflict resolution and peace-building. For example, human rights campaigning organisations can empower grassroots communities to seek redress for grievances by peaceful means rather than by violent means (Ademola, 2021). Also, Nigeria needs to engage international partnerships with agencies that specialise in conflict resolution and peace studies to enhance the ability of Nigeria to tackle banditry. Collective efforts and sharing of best practices might provide innovative solutions for long-standing security challenges.

The Path Forward

The problem with armed banditry in Nigeria has multiple dimensions, and none are easy to fix; but they are surmountable with sincerity of purpose and a collaborative effort. Through collaborative efforts with local leaders, coupled with the integration of technology and enhancing socio-economic development tools with appropriate security, may just result in a comprehensive strategy towards re-establishing peace in the region. But it is imperative that at the level of a nation, we have the will to fight this scourge. The vicious cycles of violence that have characterized northern Nigeria should be succeeded by a new narrative, one that places resilience, prosperity, and communal harmony at the centre, where citizens can live in an environment devoid of fear and violence. This transformation echoes the knowledge that peaceful coexistence and common progress are possible. With a focus on tackling the root causes of poverty, building strong ties with communities, empowering law enforcement, and embracing technology, Nigeria can carve out a path towards a future free of armed banditry.

The modern era of technology has changed the nature of criminal activities, with new forms of banditry emerging, including cybercrime, organised syndicates taking advantage of advanced technologies and many more (Cybenics, 2022). Gone are the days when cybercriminals relied on physical intimidation; they use keyboards as weapons, encroach upon the sanctity of digital ecosystems, and put businesses, governments, and individuals at risk. As per a report published by Cybersecurity Ventures, "cybercrime damage costs are predicted to reach $6 trillion annually by 2021", which means that the financial impact of these types of criminal activities is too huge (Cybersecurity Ventures, 2020).

In fact, the same technologies that make banditry so easy may also be the key to ending it. Law enforcement agencies worldwide are turning to technology to counter these high-tech tactics. Today, surveillance systems, data analytics, and artificial intelligence are important tools to find

and catch criminals. In the interest of order, predictive policing technology, for example, is used to anticipate criminal activity by analyzing previous trends, utilizing historical reports (Perry et al., 2013). This approach does raise ethical concerns around privacy and bias, but it highlights a philosophical shift in how the police are fighting crime in the 21st century.

In rural areas most badly hit by banditry, community elders and youth have come together to implement neighbourhood watch systems, supported by NGOs to build solidarity and resistance to armed groups. These efforts are attempting to strengthen security, but also to reframe the story around banditry. Trust can then slowly be rebuilt by allowing dialogue between communities and law enforcement and possibly making society a more cohesive one (Institute for Leadership and Public Policy, 2023). Still, as the story goes, the fight of the world against banditry is not just a battle of arms; it is political and socio-political.

The battle against banditry is far from complete, and its causes remain incendiary, but it underscores the need for solidarity — domestic and international. With engagement in the Sahel and the surrounding region set to continue, the international community must use this moment to take   more   inclusive   approaches   that   enable   societies   to   escape   the   cycle   of   precarity. Emphasising dialogue, development and community engagement can therefore be a concerted response to banditry not only with force but with sustained social resilience.

 However, the menace of banditry can be curtailed if the Federal Government of Nigeria can enact a new law that will handle corrupt cases in various governmental establishments. Some of the punitive measures should be life imprisonment for any person found in the case of corruption despite the level of the person in the government. This is because one of the causes of banditry can be traced to currupt practices of some of our leaders. (Forae & Gold, 2024)

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