

# BANDITRY AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA: A CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE

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## **Abstract**

Globally, nations have continued to witness different dynamics of crises or conflicts. These crises or conflicts have remained protracted depending on surrounding factors. While some of these portray an outlook of peaceful agitations or protests, others are violent as in the case of banditry in several states across Nigeria. This crisis which is also a crime presents incidences such as destruction of properties, wanton killings, rape, kidnapping, abduction, looting, waylaying and invasions, using sophisticated weapons. It is a crime that is perpetrated by either a person or group of persons known as bandit(s). They are described as persons who are outlawed, proscribed or lawless marauders who operate from ungoverned spaces and maraud from place to place. These actions negate the peaceful living of citizens as well as the much needed national security by nations such as Nigeria. Thus, a marriageable question is created on the concepts of banditry and national security in Nigeria. The objective of this paper is to critically conceptualise banditry and national security in Nigeria as well as to determine their nexus. This is with a view to understanding the impact of each on the other especially to an affected nation (Nigeria). Conflict theory was applied while various literature on the subject of banditry and national security were examined. On the whole, it would be observed that the concept of banditry and national security are inversely proportional. This means that when banditry increases, national security is negated. But when national security is elevated, banditry diminishes appropriately.

**Keywords:** Banditry, bandit, national security, marauding, ungoverned spaces.

## **Introduction**

Globally, nations around the globe have continued to witness different dynamics of crisis and conflicts which has remained either persistent or protracted based on surrounding factors. Some of these situations portray an outlook of peaceful agitations and protests, however, others portray violent outlooks leading to destruction of properties, wanton killings, assassinations, murder, just to mention a few. Either of these outlooks attracts attention from governments of nations affected by these situations with utmost effort made to ensure the return of the much desired peace, tranquility and nations' national security. One of the violent conflicts or crime as the case may be that have put nations on their toes across the globe is that of banditry as is the case in several states within Nigeria.

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Banditry is a violent organised crime carried out by either a person or group of persons who are outlawed, proscribed and marauding elements called bandits. They move from place to place, town to town (translocational) and across nations (transnational) causing mayhem, destroying properties, farmlands, looting and carrying out heinous crimes such as kidnapping, rape, killings, arson and so on. They would often commit these acts with the use of machetes, bows and arrows, fabricated rifles, axe and in this present time automatic sophisticated weapons such as rifles and guns. They carry out these acts while operating from government unoccupied spaces often called ungoverned spaces which include forests, mountainous regions, highlands and gullies of difficult terrain as well as invaded empty villages whose citizens have migrated to safe havens and possibly remain displaced due to the presence of these bandits/outlaws.

Bandits are viewed differently across the globe based on time, space and circumstance. For example, a bandit in the nineteenth century Europe, the Americas and Asia was a freedom fighter. His aim was partly to ensure the emancipation of the down trodden from the upper class or the colonized over the colonizer (Warto, 1994). Additionally, in some pre-industrial societies, peasants see bandits differently from the state; not as outlaws, hoodlums and miscreants but as avengers and "bread winners" (Hobsbawn, 1959). They would infest the roads and rivers, ravage fields and farms, sack towns, pillage churches and torch houses in an orgy of murder. They raped innocent women and caused social disharmony in the affected places.

Banditry in Africa is characterized by invasive actions leading to several vices such as kidnapping, wanton killings and so on with the use of sophisticated weapons. A bandit in traditional African setting is entirely opposite to that of America and Europe who specialize in armed robbery and other related crimes (Curott and Fink, 2008:46). They freely roam the hinterlands of Africa presenting themselves in different forms and have since been a source of wider political and security problems in a turbulent geopolitical environment with much to be desired, just as is the case in Nigeria.

Banditry in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon. It had existed prior to the 1980s in various forms across the country. It is a violent crime whose lethality has evolved from an old practice into organised crime conducted with immense sophistication and efficiency. It is now characterised by the use of modern weapons, accompanied by rape, armed robbery, kidnapping activities, cattle rustling, as well as organised attacks on villages and communities. While terrorism and insurgency are being wrestled with in the North-East, the acts of kidnapping and killing of innocent people including herders/farmers clashes take its toll in the North-Central and South-Eastern regions. The South-South region has decedent groups who, while agitating, indulge in vandalization of crude oil pipelines which are of economic importance to the state. Similar situations occur in the South-West which has experienced acts of kidnapping, assassination and wanton killings which were viewed as politically motivated. The North-West region of the country is not left out as it is bedeviled by massive banditry activities such as kidnapping, armed robbery, cattle rustling as well

as wanton killings for supremacy and power. The bandits in this region tend to use the existing large forests extending and connecting through the states to execute violent acts of banditry. They use the expansive and dense forests to disrupt rural areas and attack commuters on the highway.

### **Conceptualisation**

#### **· Banditry**

Banditry has existed right from so many centuries ago. Philosophers, researchers and scholars have viewed banditry from several perspectives. While some viewed it based on their plight and vulnerability against imminent disadvantage and sufferings due to ill administration by governments, others see it from points of description of the acts carried out by bandits. Banditry according to Tamuno (1991) is “the exercise of physical force, as to inflict injury on, or cause damage to persons or property”. Osaghae (1995) noted, however, that all forms of banditry involve the use of force, whether it is legitimate as protagonists of the state or illegitimate as is the case when force is applied by the murderer, robber or bandit. In this definition the use of force is considered a necessary element of banditry. Such force when used inflicts pains which could lead to murder, rape and all forms of destruction. Furthermore, Domenack (1978) defines banditry as the use of force whether overt or covert, in order to snatch from individuals or groups, something of value that they are not disposed to give of their own free will.

Slatta (1994) also posited that banditry involves the taking away of property by force or the threat of force, often by a group of men that usually operate in the shadows, often on the fringes of the society, in geographically isolated areas. Conklin (1992) adds that banditry is a proto-type, unprovoked and unpredictable kind of crime most feared by the public that usually involves theft with violence or threat of violence by a person with whom the victim has had no previous contact. From the point of view of Shalangwa (2013), banditry is the practice of raiding and attacking victims by members of an armed group, whether or not premeditated, using weapons of offence or defense especially in semi-organized groups for the purpose of overpowering the victim and obtaining loot or achieving some political goals. Such bandits are usually regarded as outlaws and desperate lawless marauders who do not have a definite residence or destination.

Acts of banditry have been perceived by different societies in different ways and should therefore be considered by identifying its essential features within specified historical contexts. According to White (1981), a bandit is a person who has been forced to become an outlaw by robbing from the rich and giving to the poor. He further added that the poor state of the oppressed can functionally be attributed to the attitudes and behaviours of the rich in the society resulting to robbing the rich to pay the poor. This description portrays a bandit as someone preoccupied with seeking revenge on behalf of the maligned in the society. On the other hand, Manderson (2010) asserts that bandits are outlaws who failed to stand trial becoming fugitives by the law. Society may declare such a person wanted, dead or alive and that gives any

new member of society license to kill the declared bandit with impunity. From another point of view, Wartyo (2011) defines social banditry as the act of crime committed either by the residents of a village or people in the low economic and social strata in order to fulfill their basic needs. Such acts are a response to the structural pressures, which deprive people of access to the natural resources that support their lives.

Hobsbawn (1959) proposed the construct "social bandit" and considers them as peasant outlaws who maintain some respect within peasant society and are sometimes considered by their people as heroes, champions, avengers, fighter for justice, perhaps leaders of liberation. In any case, they are seen as men to be admired, helped and supported. He further suggests that the link between banditry and violence is tied to terrorism, well rooted in peasant culture. This is what Blumel (2007) refers to as 'ancient banditry' or 'traditional banditry', which existed in the primitive or pre-colonial time. Blok (1972) further added that bandits are persons regarded by the state as outlaws, but whose umbilical cord is tied to the moral order of the peasant community.

Mikhail (1978) submits that in the Russian state, banditry is seen as one of the most honourable ways of life. The bandit is seen as the people's hero, defender and saviour. Such bandits are the implacable enemies of the state and the whole social order; they are ready to die fighting against the entire civilization of the aristocratic Chinokniks and government priesthood. In agreement to this notion, Rife (2011) opines that the social bandit flaunts authority, lives with abandon and champions the causes of the masses against elite oppression. It could however be argued that instead of championing the cause of the poor, men are more likely to turn to banditry out of desperation and hard economic realities than for vague notions of righting wrongs.

Consequently, Sullivan (2012) observed that contemporary banditry has changed in scope, nature and extent from historic antecedents. He maintains that modern day bandits are criminally inclined insurgents and conventional terrorists. He argued plausibly that these groups are a cog in the wheel of democratic governance and free market economy. To Bunker and Sullivan (1998), bandits are 'gangs, criminal enterprises, insurgents or warlords who dominate social life and erode the bods of effective security and the rule of law'. In congruent to this assertions, Williams (1998) conceived bandits as transnational gangs and criminals who extend their reach and influence by co-opting individuals and organisations through bribery, coercion and intimidation; they do so in order to facilitate, enhance or protect their own activities. Bandits in the era of globalization therefore are more than mere rural gangs and criminals. The act has metamorphosed into a network, exerting strong forces on remote area and extending its tentacles to urban settings; the expansion being accompanied by increasing level of violence. The scope, dimension and operational pattern of banditry have been enlarged around the world and in Africa in particular.

Mburu (1999) opines that the motive for contemporary banditry is the pauperization of people living in a harsh physical environment. The activities of bandits are inhumane and lead to violence, causing insecurity challenges

that encourage other forms of criminalities. The large scale effects of contemporary banditry cannot be justified on any ground when compared with what existed in the past, when bandits were feted as heroes by the peasant population, celebrated for their opposition to the oppression of the rich or predation of the government. These bandits are emerging as a serious impediment to democratic governance and sustainability around the world.

Mburu (1999:100) in his study of the Horn of Africa, further observed that banditry had transmuted from what he called 'innocuous tribal sport' into terrorism unleashed by hardened former guerilla fighters that were used to killing and having little respect for the laws of the land, or any symbol of formal authority. These new forms of banditry even involve both inter and intra-ethnic and cross-border raids for livestock. Crummey (1999) however argued that, banditry was indeed a significant African phenomenon in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and embedded in rural societies. Its motive was protest against centralism of authority and it was recognized by rural dwellers. Furthermore, traditional banditry has been explored as a vocation where individuals waged war against greedy village chiefs or the political unit on behalf of the community while living in the forest as hermits until justice was exacted. He further explained that local languages have specific terms for bandits and if the 'criminals' in question are not locally recognized as bandits and labeled as such African languages, then they are not bandits. He views Ethiopia as an African example rife with banditry, an institution embedded in agrarian, hierarchical, class-divided society, and that Ethiopia has vernacular term by which bandits are known - *Shefta*. Along the Southern Ethiopian/Kenyan border, banditry and incidents involving ethnic conflicts are common while in the west, the Gambella region is subjected to inter-ethnic conflict and political violence originating from Sudan. From a means of obtaining a few animals and improving one's fighting prowess, Osamba (1998:18) noted that raiding had evolved into military operations using conventional war tactics and involving thousands of livestock. Not only young men are killed, but women and children were brutally murdered as well. Huts, stores and harvests were set on fire and shops looted. The government's reaction was usually to send military helicopters to bombard the suspected bandits' hideouts, though without much success.

Mburu (1999:100) observed that, "with the total destruction of the economy, the only employment left for young men is banditry as a fleeting opportunity or under the ambit of the militia of one fiefdom or the other". He further noted that similar experience in Somalia has also shown how banditry can be exported to another country through refugees that include former regular soldiers who hide sophisticated firearms in the bush for use to rob or execute rivals.

Blumel, (2007) on the other hand associated banditry with conditions of famine, economic instability, social distress and general societal breakdown resulting from civil war or rebellion whereas Sztompka (1993) asserted that the emergence of bandits is greatest during periods of social crises, when established ways of life, rule and laws are undermined, ruling elites are discredited and traditions are rejected. Social instability, poverty, politics,



corruption and economic depression are factors that often precipitate banditry. These causes exist as a common denominator in most African societies. The East, Central, North and West African countries experience the orgy and invasion of bandits. It is clear from the foregoing that banditry has bearing on the internal dynamics of a society, occasioned by social, political, economic and environmental problems. These internal dynamics directly undermine security and stability, thereby enabling a multitude of criminal activities across societies. (Currott and Fink 2008:46). Lynch (2008) attributes armed banditry therefore to be a culmination of a wider phenomenon where there is symmetrical connection between poverty, unemployment, political instability and infectious lawlessness.

Slatta (1987) opined that the victims of armed banditry on the other hand are seen as 'neutral victims' who despite having taken every reasonable precaution, fall victim to armed robbers. This class of victims includes poor defenseless farmers who are frequently molested and sometimes shot by the robbers. He further notes that, some victims take risks, perhaps being aware of the dangers and these include traders who usually travel to transact their businesses in various markets and get back home. These traders according to him carry money to pay for their merchandise and have always been victimized by robbers. He however summed it up that "almost any weakness (and even virtue) on the part of an individual can be a cause of victimization depending on the circumstances".

In general, the age of maximum criminality is reached in youth or young adulthood, and from this point there is a progressive decline in the amount of crime with advancing age. Young persons between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five are much more involved in crime that requires physical energy to commit. The youth population for example in Nigeria is estimated by the United Nations to be above 25 million. These youths who are economically, socially and politically deprived are among the main perpetrators of armed criminality and gangsterism (Centre for International Cooperation and Security, 2005:14). The youth seem to play a critical role in any community and once they are impoverished and marginalized by economic and social realities, they become available and ready to be mobilized. They can therefore offer their services to the highest bidder and can be easily manipulated

Usher (1992) divided the costs that can be incurred from the activities of bandits into four categories. First is society's loss in terms of the opportunity cost of resources used by bandits. Second is the loss from the opportunity costs of the resources employed by members of society to fend off bandits. Third is the destruction of assets by acts of banditry. Fourth is the social deadweight loss incurred because members of society shift resources from production processes relatively vulnerable to theft to less vulnerable production processes. Currott and Fink (2010) further explored the havoc wrought by bandits upon individuals and societies. They argue that by stealing from a member of society, the bandit not only takes from the victim (thereby breaking a widely-accepted rule against theft), but also offends the unwelcome authority that oversees law enforcement. The victim suffers from the losses caused by the act of banditry.

According to Muggah and Batchelor (2002, p. 32), armed banditry can severely affect the supply of cash crops as public and commercial transportation to markets is often interrupted and consequently, farmers are forced to abandon commercial harvests. Where this happens repeatedly on a large scale, social investment often declines with broad ripple effects on both foreign investor confidence and overseas development assistance. The existence of small arms and incidents of armed banditry have also been observed to affect the supply and delivery of essential social services by non-governmental and governmental organizations. In some instances, field staff of such development agencies, come under attack by armed bandits. Muggah and Batchelo (2002, p. 35) opined that "to avoid areas where there are rising levels of insecurity particularly the risks posed to government and NGO extension workers, planners turn to regions where the return on their investment and performance justify continued funding from results oriented donors".

It is also noteworthy that the socio-economic impact of banditry cannot be uniform to all communities or regions. This is so because the structure of the society, the kinds of social controls and pattern of relationships could be responsible for the presence of bandits in a community. In some communities for example like the Niger-Delta region in Nigeria, banditry is a major force in its overall economy and it is seen as an important determinant of the region's future development. Ginifer and Ismail (2005, p. 60) also noted that, "the threat and actual use of violence by armed groups, vigilantes and robbers has led to communities retreating into themselves and often had stimulated the growth of private security services (for those who can afford them) and vigilante 'protection' for the poor".

Therefore, banditry is an organised crime carried out by individual(s) who by way of conspiracy have resolved to invade the safety, tranquility and secure nature of a whole or part of a Nigeria. Their conspired resolve would often be unleashed in form of various vices such as killing, kidnapping, arson, etc preceded by infliction of terror. Their infliction of terror could be determined by their level of armament, operative maneuver and inhuman treatment to their captives which could be a whole village, country or state, as the case may be and as it exists in several states in the geopolitical zones in Nigeria.

#### · **National Security**

National security seems a wholesome wide umbrella under which lie various forms of security like human security, economic security, financial security, institutional security, educational security, food (agricultural) security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, political security and the security of all aspects of human living and endeavour. Before conceptualizing national security, a definite and clear knowledge of what security is will be sought.

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), security means protection from hidden and hurtful disruptions in the pattern of daily life in homes, offices or communities. It further defines it as the state of being or making safe, secure from danger. Wehmeier and Ashby (2002) however

define security as protection against something that might happen in the future or as the activities involved in protecting a country, a building or persons against threats or danger. Essentially, security must be related to the presence of peace, safety and happiness; and the protection of human and physical resources as well as the absence of crisis, threats or human injury amongst others as the presence of peace could facilitate progress. According to Francis (2005, p. 22) security is a state of being safe and the absence of fear, anxiety, danger, poverty and oppression. It is the preservation of core values and the absence of threats to these values. Imobighe (1990, p. 224) however opines that security is the freedom from threats to a nation's capability to defend and develop itself, promote its values and lawful interest. Zabadi (2005, p. 3) on the other hand posits that:

Security is a state in which people or things are not exposed to danger of physical or moral aggression, accident, theft or decline. This view is associated with the survival of the state and the preservation of its citizens. In other words, the state has the responsibility of the use of force and power for the safety of its territory and its people.

The term "national security" does not appear to lend itself to any precise definition. This is partly because; the nature and concept of national security may vary from one state to the other. Like other contested concepts, the term contains ideological element that renders empirical evidence irrelevant as a means of resolving the debate. It is a very complex issue that is all encompassing and means different things to different people but fundamentally it has to do with the survival and safety of the nation state including but not limited to the exercise of military, economic, political and diplomatic powers in the society. To achieve national security, deliberate policies are enacted by the government to ensure the continued survival of the state to enable the citizens to carry out their daily legitimate activities. However, two main tendencies in defining national security are identifiable. The first is the state-centered concept which views national security in terms of defence and survival of the state. The conception equates "defence" with "security" and bestows its protection to the military as the custodians of national security, and equates national security with the security of the state (conventional security).

The problem of this conception is that it is based on the erroneous belief that in all circumstances "nation" equates to a "state" and therefore the object of national security is the nation. But, this is not always the case in many countries. Giving the definition of a nation as a large community of people sharing a common history, culture and language and living in a particular territory under one government, a nation may not always coincide with the state. For instance, the Nigerian state is made up of many ethnic nationalities with different cultural, religious and social backgrounds. Where they coincide, the object and purpose of the state will be to protect the sacred attributes of the nation. But where they do not, the state becomes an instrument in the hands of the dominating nationality to pursue and protect its survival. In this connection,



it would appear that a state without nationality crisis might have the capacity to view its national security in terms of protecting its internal values from outside threat and interference. The 1999 constitution however, attempts to close the gap in this nation and state dichotomy perhaps, by describing Nigeria as a nation in its preamble and declaring it as a state in Section 2 (1) which says "we the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria: Having firmly and solemnly resolved: To live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign Nation...."

Ocheche (1998) holds that national security focuses on the amassment of military armament, personnel and expenditure. It is in this context that in a major effort to re-examine Nigeria's defence policy in the early 1990s (Otu-Nyam (1990, p. 257 cited in Jega 2007, p. 192) conceptualized national security as having the following attributes:

1. Deter attack on the home front;
2. Defend the territorial integrity if deterrence fails;
3. Deter insurgency and deal with internal crisis;
4. Deter foreign military intervention in the country's neighbouring states.

Furthermore, Imobighe (1990, p. 224) sees national security as something that has to do with freedom from danger or with a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interest and enhance the well-being of its people. He further maintained that the military factor thus ranked very high in the actualization of these pursuits for a very long time. Saliu (1997, p. 12), on the other hand, perceived national security in its traditional conception as the absence of physical threats, which is perhaps the reason that security in this sense was essentially predicated on military rationalizations. Therefore, he maintained that the military capability of a state, measured in terms of its combat readiness and sophistication of weapons in its arsenal, number of military personnel etc were considered as pivotal to the security of a state. In the same vein, Ate (1992, p. 256) maintained that national security has to do with the defense and protection of the sovereignty of the country and political jurisdictions against external and indeed internal threats.

A critical examination of these views show that too much emphasis was given to the military or conventional aspect of national security. This reduced national security only to the protection of a country's territorial integrity, while ignoring other critical aspects of security which include poverty reduction, employment generation and justice which are pre-conditions for peaceful co-existence in every nation of the world. The perspective of national security in these contexts is too militaristic and it downplays the non-military dimensions. When the security of a state is measured in terms of sophisticated weapons and the number of military personnel, the health system, education system and critical infrastructure necessary for national development will take the back seat. These sectors will become marginalized in favour of the procurement of arms and ammunition. This perception was largely dominant and responsible

for the “arms race” between the two ideological rivals – USA and Soviet Union – during the Cold War. It is advisable therefore, to view security in a state with nationality crisis in terms of contending groups, organizations and individuals, as the prime object of security. This dispenses with the narrow-minded conception of a national security primarily from its military-strategic dimension particularly in terms of defending its territory and sovereignty but recognizes that the process of nation building with the inherent contradictions constitute major national security threat.

The second tendency in the definition of national security involves the factoring of the state and the individual into the constituents of the definition. According to this definition, security involves freedom from danger or threat to a nation’s ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and well-being of its people. It refers to the security of a nation-state, its institutions including the general well-being of its citizens (Ate, 1992). This takes into account the significance of human well-being in the security considerations of a country especially in a developing country like ours. As we have already pointed out, one of the greatest crises in Nigeria today is poverty and frustration which is thrived upon by banditry. This occurs where the state fails to meet the yearnings and aspirations of its citizens thereby generating security challenges within a state. Therefore, a nation-state can enhance its security by striving hard to eliminate poverty and create opportunities for its citizens and not necessarily relying on military option (Ate, 1992).

Accordingly, national security must include the capacity to provide the citizens with an environment which is socially, economically and politically conducive to happiness and relative prosperity. Thus, tranquility and well-being of a society are necessary components of national security. According to Al-Mashal, (2010) national security should address “the physical, social and psychological quality of life of a society and its members both in domestic setting and within the larger regional and global system (non-conventional security). National security has been construed in different ways, each of which emphasized vital factors underlying ideals.

In his contribution to national security discourse, Paleri (2008) posited that national security is the measurable state of the capacity of a nation to overcome the multi-dimensional threats to the apparent well-being of its people and its survival as a nation-state at any given time by balancing all instruments of state policy through governance, and is extendable to global security by variables external to it. National security is therefore, the requirement to maintain the survival of a nation-state through the use of economic power, diplomacy, power projection and political power. Ibeanu (2000, p. 24) maintained that security means the capacity of groups (and individuals as their agents) to provide their physical and psychological needs and livelihoods. This means a progressive elimination of objective conditions that limit this capacity as well as reduction of fears and anxieties about their abilities to meet these needs. In this sense, Ibeanu further posited that security has to do with protection from poverty, exploitation, disease, bio-chemical contamination,

injustice and the like. An assessment of the views of Ibeanu shows that emphasis was laid on human aspects of security which emphasized poverty reduction, equitable distribution of resources and entrenchment of justice.

All the above definitions show that national security has metamorphosed overtime from issues of just national defence to more encompassing situations affecting national economy and existence. It was expanded to include international economics, long term goals of national development and reconciliation. They are very important for the security of any nation. With this approach Asad (2007) says "that national security cannot be narrowed down to exclusively military term. Socio economic and cultural aspects, problems of development and modernization, and national integration should be deemed important in considering it". Al-Marshat (1985) is of the opinion that national security is more than territorial defence and should focus on the "physical, social and psychological equality of life of a society and its members both in the domestic setting and within the large regional and global system". According to Matthew (1989), global development now suggests the need for another analogous broadening definition of national security to include resources, environmental and demographic issues.

Richard (2020) in his contribution saw national security as the requirement to maintain the security of the nation. It includes measures put in place by government to guard against political, economic, energy, food, environmental, health, communication, transportation and loss of territorial integrity. To achieve national security, a country must invest in diverse areas and address current emanating threats such as economic, youth unemployment, disease epidemic, extremism, terrorism, insurgency, environmental degradation, energy insufficiency, drug cartels, child trafficking, cybercrime, corruption, trade-imbalance and outright hostility from foreign governments.

National security practically touches all spheres of human existence. The best way to approach it is from its overlapping effects that range from food security to issues of environmental degradation. It also touches on health matters and encompasses psychological security as well as arms security. As much as a nation may face danger, national security may also be viewed as a multidimensional process whose purpose is to safeguard national values such as survival, self-preservation and self-perpetuation, which is why Ken (2019) viewed national security in terms of sustainable development rather than the narrower term: environment degradation and scarcity. He reincorporates multiple, social, economic (including food security) and political factors shaping environmental conditions and environmental governance, which were missing from the simplified analysis of environmental scarcity and violent conflict. National security is appropriately broadened to embrace much more than the traditional state-centered and fundamentally military issues often associated with national security.

On the whole, national security encompasses efforts geared towards achieving total and absolute security and safety of all entities that make up a nation state such as Nigeria. The security of these entities uphold the sustainability of a nation state's autonomy and sovereignty. It encapsulates

the confidence of a nation's state by its citizens on its ability to provide, protect, secure and encyst the nation (Nigeria) in safety against any aggression, be it internally or from external means.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Conflict theory emphasizes a materialist interpretation of history with a critical stance toward existing social arrangements, and political programme of revolution or, at least, reform. It elaborates on power differentials, such as class conflict, and generally contrast historically dominant ideologies. It is therefore a macro-level analysis of society (Marx, 1998). Karl Marx is the proponent of this theory. He set out to highlight the ideological aspects inherent in traditional thought, however, many of these perspectives hold parallels and it does not refer to a unified school of thought. He propounded that societies are in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. It further holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than by consensus and conformity. According to the theory, those with wealth and power try to hold on to it by any means possible, chiefly by suppressing the poor and powerless. A basic premise of conflict theory is that individuals and groups within society will work to try to maximize their own wealth and power.

Conflict theory has been used to explain a wide range of social phenomena, including wars, revolutions, poverty, discrimination, and domestic violence. It ascribes most of the fundamental developments in human history, such as democracy and civil rights, to capitalistic attempts to control the masses (as opposed to a desire for social order). Central tenets of conflict theory are the concepts of social inequality, the division of resources, and the conflicts that exist between different socioeconomic classes. Many types of societal conflicts throughout history can be explained using the central tenets of conflict theory. Marx theorized about the bourgeoisie, a group of people that represented members of society who hold the majority of the wealth and means. The proletariat is the other group: it includes those considered working class or poor.

With the rise of capitalism, Marx theorized that the bourgeoisie, a minority within the population, would use their influence to oppress the proletariat, the majority class. This way of thinking is tied to a common image associated with conflict theory-based models of society. Conflict theory assumes that the elite will set up systems of laws, traditions and other societal structures in order to further support their own dominance while preventing others from joining their ranks. Marx theorized that, as the working class and poor were subjected to worsening conditions, a collective consciousness would raise more awareness about inequality, and this would potentially result in revolt. If, after the revolt, conditions were adjusted to favor the concerns of the proletariat, the conflict circle would eventually repeat but in the opposite direction. The bourgeoisie would eventually become the aggressor and revolter, grasping for the return of the structures that formerly maintained their dominance. In current conflict theory, there are four primary assumptions which are helpful to understand: competition, revolution, structural inequality, and war.

Given conflict theorists' assumption that conflict occurs between social classes, one outcome of this conflict is a revolutionary event. The idea is that change in a power dynamic between groups does not happen as the result of a gradual adaptation. Rather, it comes about as the symptom of conflict between these groups. In this way, changes to a power dynamic are often abrupt and large in scale, rather than gradual and evolutionary. An important assumption of conflict theory is that human relationships and social structures all experience inequalities of power. In this way, some individuals and groups inherently develop more power and reward than others. Following this, those individuals and groups that benefit from a particular structure of society tend to work to maintain those structures as a way of retaining and enhancing their power.

Conflict theory has been criticised for being too politicised by its association with Marx and its widespread use by advocates in numerous causes and movements. Critics also argue it downplays unity in society while taking a negative view of society as one filled with conflicts, tension and coercion (Marx, 1998). With respect to issues of banditry and national security in Nigeria, the stance of Karl Marx is apt wherein he posited that with the rise of capitalism, Marx theorized that the bourgeoisie, a minority within the population, would use their influence to oppress the proletariat, the majority class. This way of thinking is tied to a common image associated with conflict theory-based models of society. Conflict theory assumes that the elite will set up systems of laws, traditions and other societal structures in order to further support their own dominance while preventing others from joining their ranks. Marx theorized that, as the working class and poor were subjected to worsening conditions, a collective consciousness would raise more awareness about inequality, and this would potentially result in revolt. The perpetration of banditry in Nigeria is a total conspiracy with political elite and mongers. They use these criminals as gangs by taking advantage of their low income state and they being of the low class. The action of these elite have created a financial stability consciousness in the mind of these bandits who have come to realize that their financial stability could only be achieved through the perpetration of these acts instead of other means such as rearing of cattle. Thus, national security is relegated to the background while impunity thrives.

### **Nexus between Banditry and National Security**

Banditry is viewed, within the context of the state system, as a threat to the security of a nation. This is because security affects not only the satisfaction of human needs, but also the fundamental issue of survival of the human being or the nation. It involves all forms of illegal and criminal activities across the nation backed by the use of arms and dangerous weapons, while national security revolves around the ability of the state to protect and preserve itself, its institutions and the well-being of its citizens through the provision of adequate security and development. Banditry threatens national security through the destruction of lives and property, destruction of farms and other agricultural products and it encourages the proliferation of guns and other dangerous weapons used for criminal violence and armed robbery.



According to the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, human security which is a content of national security advances comprehensive responses that address the multidimensional causes and consequences of complex challenges (Kofi, 2005). As such, it calls for integrated actions among a network of stakeholders to ensure lasting responses to the most difficult deficits in peace and development knowing that when there is a threat against the stability of a nation, humans are the vulnerable targets. Report by Gurara Patriots and Attakar Development Association submits that the rise of banditry as a conflict pattern has brought about an increase in the complexity of the nature of banditry with consequent demeaning of national security.

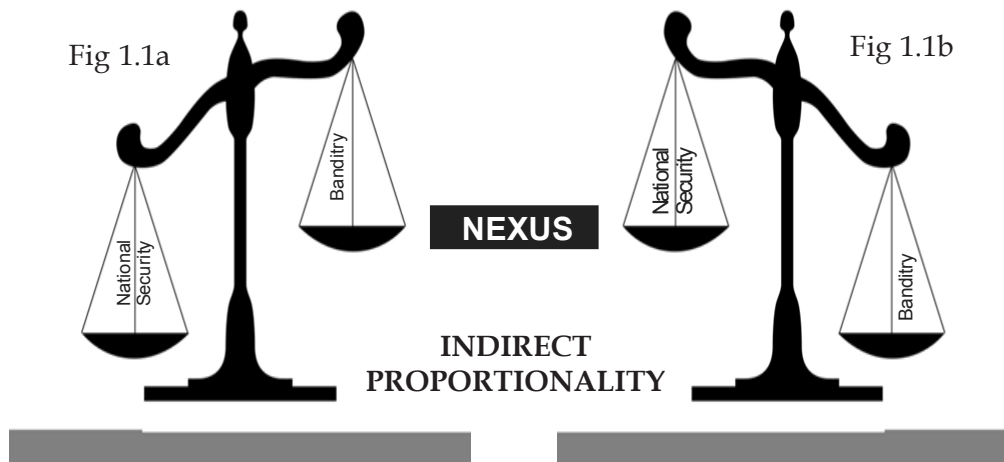
The Guardian Newspaper of 13 April 2019, posited that the spate of banditry activities in the affected parts of Nigeria has been with resultant killings, arson and near lawlessness. It further presented that national and human development in those affected parts of the country have arguably been overshadowed by the activities of bandits who take delight in snuffing life out of innocent and helpless villagers, destroying their properties, kidnapping hapless travelers on the highways or herders in the bush even as they rustle their cattle and make fortunes from their families in ransom. This is in consonance with the position of Hobbes (1651), a social science philosopher who stated that "life is cruel, brutish and short" hence residents in the affected areas of the two states live in perpetual fear, reasons being that state institutions and agencies are not effective and efficient. Leadership has failed to address these threats leaving the people on their own. The country has not been able to fulfil its potentials due to the existence of these threats in the polity. Additionally, Nigeria has been on a steady decline in the Global Peace Index. Out of 158 countries surveyed, the country was 117th in 2007, 129th in 2008 and 2009, 137<sup>th</sup> in 2010, 142nd in 2011 and 146th in 2012 (Country Economy, 2019). Even a country like Chad is more peaceful than Nigeria. It remains the duty of government to provide an enabling environment for the populace to fulfill her potential and the absence of this pose a threat in the polity of the country. The presence of banditry comes with economic instability.

Okoli and Okpaleke (2014) posits in like minds that banditry poses a significant threat to Nigeria's public safety and, by extension, national security. Understanding national security from the revisionist perspective spearheaded by McNamara which considers national security more comprehensively in terms of freedom from all forms of social, socio-economic, geographical, territorial, economic and sociopolitical vulnerabilities, acknowledges that there exists not only a relationship between banditry and national security but also, that banditry has a strategic implication on national security in Nigeria. They reasoned that any threat to public safety and well-being is a threat to Nigeria's national security. Giving that banditry in the form of armed robbery poses a serious threat to public safety and well-being, they submitted that banditry constitutes a veritable threat to Nigeria's national security.

The safety of lives and properties in Nigeria is a fundamental human right enshrined in the constitution of the country. However, since the transition to democracy in May 1999, governments at different levels in the country have

failed to ensure the security of its citizens. This fact can be seen in the various political violence and assassinations, electoral violence, wanton ethnic, tribal and religious conflicts, sectarian violence, militancy, kidnapping, armed robbery, bomb blasts, insurgency and banditry which has continued to rock the Nigerian society. The enthusiasm and euphoria that followed the transition to democracy have been replaced by grievances and concerns over the experiment's failure to ensure adequate security within the country. The security situation in Nigeria has remained precarious since the return of democratic rule in 1999. For example, Nigeria is ranked low on the UNDP's 2016 Human Development Index (HDI) survey, which focuses on life expectancy, school enrolment, and income indices. These rankings tell the sad story of Nigeria's deteriorating material well-being.

Security, peace, stability and good governance have always been regarded as a prerequisite for the achievement of any meaningful socio-economic development of any nation-state, however, challenges of threats such as banditry has continued to remain a major stumbling block to achieving this especially in banditry infested areas. These threats do not only pose a stunt to the lives and properties of citizens, discourage local businesses and scare away foreign investment but portrays a bad image of these affected states specifically and the nation at large. The banditry threats have become a phenomenon that needs to be tackled most seriously so as to create an enabling environment for the much-desired socio-economic development. As much as total security is rarely possible even for most powerful nations, the need to ensure the strengthening of the national security objectives which include peace and stability, ethno-religious/communal harmony, peaceful co-existence, food security, sustainable socio-economic development, which involves strengthening the rule of law; creating a democratic political culture, nurturing civility, promoting good governance, transparency, accountability and facilitating institutional and structural reforms amenable to democratization the country, cannot be over emphasized (Jega, 2007, p. 195). Thus the reason for the recognition of these factors during the production of the draft National Defense Policy which stressed the need for an: All-encompassing condition in which citizens can live in freedom, peace and safety; participate fully in the process of governance, enjoy the protection of fundamental human rights; have access to resources and necessities of life and inhabit an environment which is conducive to their health and well-being (Report Draft on National Defense Policy; cited in Jega, 2007: 194). As much as banditry is antagonistic to national security, the variable of national security in turn would remain repulsive to it, thus, making the two variables are indirectly linked or proportional in existence as depicted in Fig 1.1 below:

**Fig 1.1 Relationship between Banditry and National Security**

Source: Author's Compilation

In Fig 1.1a above, it will be observed that the scale tilted downwards because national security is heavier and significant than banditry. This also means that national security is maintained and made robust. However, in Fig 1.1b, it will be observed that where banditry thrives, it outweighs national security, thus posing a threat to it. It is indeed a reflection of inverse proportionality. Thus, the study is of the opinion that banditry could be viewed as a deliberate or propagated act by an individual or group of persons to frequently deprive innocent people of their belongings or source of livelihood with the aid of arms. It could be carried out for personal/selfish gains and on behalf of maligned persons in the society. It could also be carried out against a state following grief of social deprivation, tribal antagonism, denials and sectional intimidation leading to possible ethnic cleansing, just to mention a few. It could further be characterized by destruction of lives and properties, destruction of farms and other agricultural products and continuous proliferation of guns and other dangerous weapons used for criminal violence and armed robbery. Where a state displays unwillingness to either intervene or stop the acts against the maligned or deprived, national security is threatened. Banditry has been a real threat to Nigeria's public safety and defence, thus, becoming increasingly one of the worst types of domestic insurgencies affecting Nigeria's national security. It has resulted in the loss of lives, human injury, and internal displacement of the population as well as refugee crises. This condition goes hand in hand with consequences that does not reflect a unified collective well-being for the society. It creates a sense of insecurity which has the potential to impede any country's productivity.

The presence of these threats entails the absence or degradation of absolute protection of a nation's territorial integrity both from external aggression and internal insurrections such as banditry depending on its source or origin. It is the umbrella under which other security that pertains to citizens' existence and livelihood rest. A breach to national security presents that it has been

undermined. Thus, deliberate efforts through all means (both kinetic and non-kinetic) must be employed to ensure restoration of absolute safety against the breach. As much as provision of national security is a responsibility vested on the nation state (conventional), circumstance could present itself whereby citizens defend themselves in organized forms to ensure the return of safety (non-conventional). These organized forms could be formation of vigilante groups or community policing groups which will all be parts of efforts geared towards accentuating national security over banditry at all times

It follows, therefore, that national security is directly negatively impacted by the activities of banditry thus these two concepts are inversely proportional to each other. Banditry as a danger to the security of the State, affects the country's territorial space (ungoverned space), the lives of its people and its socio-political and economic institutions. In the case of a nation, security is indivisible in terms of its territory and population, and a threat to a part is equivalent to a threat of the whole. Therefore, it obviously means that banditry is at an indirect variability to national security.

### **Way Forward**

No nation-state progresses or develops in the face of threats against its preservation or security. The threat of banditry does not only negate human existence and socio-economic activities, it is counter-productive to a nation state's growth and aspiration being that the nation's national security is infringed upon. Thus, it is imperative that decisive steps be taken by nations to preserve and protect the existence of national security by all means possible and ensure the degradation of banditry or any other threat that comes with it from existence. Therefore, to achieve this,

- a. The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) would need to investigate and unveil the identities of these bandits for easy prosecution.
- b. The FGN must ensure that the law enforcement agencies as well as the judiciary are equipped and made fervent in tackling the menace of banditry with a view to ensuring the maintenance of Nigeria's national security.
- c. Ungoverned spaces across the country (borderlands, forests, arid regions, etc) should be made governed through the use of ICT efforts by required law enforcement agencies so as to monitor activities in and around them.
- d. Monitoring of border activities by various security and border agencies should be intensified so as to contain the vast illicit proliferation of various calibers of arms and ammunition into the country with a view to enhancing the national security of Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

Nations thrive and develop only when citizens, socio-economic environment and governing entities ride on a peaceful, coercive, mutual and secure environment. This attracts the much needed development and economic growth for all and sundry, however, with the invasion of the menace of banditry, a degradation in the aforementioned occurs thereby creating an uncondusive

environment for citizens to live and exist. The concept of banditry as was viewed by several philosophers and members of the academia is that it is a menace that negates national productiveness. As much as in the past, it was celebrated by the poor and down trodden, it was and has remained a criminal act in which the person(s) committing or perpetrating it are held liable by the state both in the past and in these contemporary times. Inversely, national security is a germane need by citizens and nations to thrive, thus, it abhors the presence or existence of banditry. For nations to achieve its aspirations leading to the fulfilment of mandates/promises to citizens by governments, deliberate decisions against the menace of banditry must be taken. Some of these decisions could include proscribing the bandits as enemies of the nation state, equipping and making law enforcement agencies viable as well as ensuring that the nation's judicial systems are alive to unleash justice as may be required by law against the menace in favour of national security.

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