

The Consequences of Banditry and Possession of SALW in Shinkafi and Zurmi LGA, Zamfara State

Dickson Ogbonnaya Igwe¹, Jibrin Ubale Yahaya²,
Abdullahi Adamu³ and Charles Olusanya⁴

^{1&2}Department of Criminology and Security Studies

³Department of Political Science

⁴Department of Peace and Conflict Resolution,
National Open University of Nigeria,

Corresponding Author: digwe@noun.edu.ng

Abstract

The surge in armed banditry spreading across regions and countries particularly Nigerian is threatening and scary. Such threats, heightened the vulnerability of defenseless citizens as they provide justification for the escalation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW). Cattle rustling, kidnapping, armed robbery, raids on villages or settlements and indiscriminate killings, sexual and gender-based violence, among others are consequences of these threats. The speed at which this global concern is infesting regions and countries particularly Nigeria is unprecedented. This scourge has penetrated hinterlands scaring away farmers from accessing their farm land for farming activities. Zamfara State, in North West Nigeria is worst hit in recent time. While there is undoubtedly, global concern with, and, arguably, action on the scourge of small arms proliferation, there is a continuing and urgent need for more focused analyses of the specific responses and local dimensions of banditry and proliferation of small arms problems. Using Berger and Luckman's social constructionist, social disorganisation theory by Robert martins drawn from Anomie theory of Emile Durkheim and Social Differentiation Theory by Edwin Sutherland as theoretical frameworks, the study adopts exploratory design to involved thematic analysis of qualitative data gathered through interviews, focus group discussion and case study. The findings show that whereas inter global, regional and national migration and alarms exist, the show of collective and individual concerns is essential to throw searchlights on the problem of surging banditry and illegal traffic of SALW, and for generating the necessary political will by layers of authorities, local awareness, early warning as proactive intervention for solutions are crucial to curb the menace.

Key Words: Armed banditry, SALW, Shinkafi, Zurmi, Zamfara State, 2019-2023.

Les conséquences du banditisme et de la possession d'ALPC dans les zones de gouvernement local de Shinkafi et Zurmi, dans l'État de Zamfara

Résumé

La montée du banditisme armé qui se propage dans les régions et les pays, en particulier au Nigéria, est menaçante et effrayante. Cette menace a accru la vulnérabilité des citoyens sans défense, car elle justifie l'escalade et la prolifération des armes légères et de petit calibre (ALPC). Le vol de bétail, les enlèvements, les vols à main armée, les raids sur les villages ou les implantations et les meurtres aveugles, les violences sexuelles et sexistes, entre autres, sont les conséquences de ces menaces. La vitesse à laquelle ce fléau mondial envahit les régions et les pays, en particulier le Nigéria, est sans précédent. Ce fléau a pénétré dans l'arrière-pays, dissuadant les agriculteurs d'accéder à leurs terres agricoles pour des activités agricoles et l'État de Zamfara, dans le nord-ouest du Nigéria, est le plus touché ces derniers temps. Bien qu'il existe sans aucun doute une préoccupation mondiale et des mesures à prendre pour lutter contre le fléau de la prolifération des armes légères, il existe un besoin continu et urgent d'analyses plus ciblées des réponses spécifiques et des dimensions locales du banditisme et des problèmes de prolifération des armes légères. En utilisant le constructivisme social de Berger et Luckman, la désorganisation sociale de Robert Martin, tirée de la théorie de l'anomie d'Emile Durkheim et la théorie de la différenciation sociale d'Edwin Sutherland comme cadres théoriques, l'étude adopte une conception exploratoire pour impliquer l'analyse thématique des données qualitatives recueillies au moyen d'entretiens, de discussions de groupe et d'études de cas. Les résultats montrent que, bien que des migrations et des alarmes inter-mondiales, régionales et nationales existent, la manifestation des préoccupations collectives et individuelles est essentielle pour mettre en lumière le problème de la montée du banditisme et du trafic illégal d'ALPC et pour générer la volonté politique nécessaire des différents niveaux d'autorité, la sensibilisation locale, l'alerte précoce comme intervention proactive pour trouver des solutions sont cruciales pour enrayer la menace.

Mots clés : banditisme armé, ALPC, Shinkafi, Zurmi, État de Zamfara, 2019-2023.

Introduction

The increasing wave of banditry across regions and countries occasioned by the disturbing proliferation of SALW has not only constitute serious humanitarian challenge to the security and development of human rights, and global justice, but dangerously feeding the upsurge of insurgency and terrorism at various levels. Besides being used to kill and displace victims, illegal access, possession and use of small arms constitute significant threat to human and material security which have endangered the development process for years or sometimes decades^{1,2}. It follows that no meaningful progress is possible if SALW is not regulated in any society. However, while state and researchers are busy grappling with the politics of banditry and SALW trade, little attention is given to the consequences of banditry and the illegal possession of SALW across the regions of Nigeria. Hence, the focus of this study is to examine The Consequences of Banditry and Possession of SALW in Shinkafi and Zurmi LGA, Zamfara State.

Banditry across northwest Nigeria committed by armed bandits has escalated to other zones where they lay siege on farmers who no longer feel safe to go to their farms for fear of bandit attack. This recent development is painfully affecting food price and food security because only few courageous farmers dare to go to the farm. Beyond food insecurity, political and economic instabilities resulting from banditry, the proliferation and misuse of SALW account for the heightened fear of the unknown by all within and outside the region as captured by Osimen and Akintunde³. Other problems such as armed banditry, armed robbery, ethnic and militia restiveness, kidnapping, cultism in tertiary institutions and general insecurity of lives and property are due to the proliferation of SALW. In fact, armed banditry and proliferation SALW are twin threats to global peace. They manifest in, and are intertwined with unsettling social order and peaceful coexistence. However, there are local concerns that provide the enabling environment for the menace as shown below.

Rural banditry and cattle rustling intersect with various significant issues in the Nigerian political economy such as concerns regarding human and national security, shifts in state-society dynamics, the influence of climate change on farming practices and different work sectors, the emerging issue of food security, and the modernisation of agriculture, as well as the matter of relationships between different social groups and maintaining social cohesion within Nigeria's diverse and multifaceted environment.

Sadly, this has led to false beliefs about the difficulties herders bring upon themselves by seemingly choosing a traditional lifestyle for which other culture seems to frown at despite their contribution to the nutritional need for all. This is evidenced by the numerous and violent clashes that pastoralists have with agricultural farmers. As Azam and Gubert¹ have succinctly put it, the perception of nomadic Fulani herders as violent people is common. Viewpoints such as the cow complex and the tragedy of the commons in the pastoralism literature serve to support the inclination to hold nomadic herders accountable for the issues they bring as a professional group. Nomadism as a way of life transcends regular and irregular migration to transhuman movement.

Historically, the phenomenon of migration predates the naissance of modern literacy. In other words, the movement of people from one place to another is as old as human history and back to antiquity. Migration is a multidimensional phenomenon that assumes a variety from such as forced migration, voluntary and involuntary migration, irregular or illegal migration among others.² However, as a key aspect of the process of society's development and is inescapably linked with the legends of the origin of most societies around the world; meaning that the histories of many societies around the world are often characterised by tales of migratory movements and human settlements.³

Nigeria since its existence has experienced different forms of migration. Among other west African countries, Nigeria stands as the most attractive destination for migrants in the region. About 74% immigrants in Nigeria are from Benin, Mali, Liberia etc.,⁴ not to mention neighbouring countries like Cameroon, Niger, Chad, and other countries in Africa and the world. The statistics provided by the NPC show that total number of 971, 450 immigrants resided in Nigeria in 2005 and it was projected to increase to about 1.1 million in 2010.⁵

¹ Azam, J.P. & F. Gubert. "Migrants Remittances and the household in Africa: A Review of the Evidence". *Journal of African Economies*, Vol. 15 AERC Supplements 2, pp 426-462. (2006).

² Block, A & Chimienti, M., "Irregular Migration in a globalizing world. In Block A and Chimienti, M (eds) Irregular Migrants: Policy, Politics, Motives and Everyday lives: Ethnic and Racial Studies", Oxon, New York: Rutledge. Pp: 1-15, (2012).

³ Mgbeafulu, M. C., "Migration and the economy: Igbo migrants and the Nigerian economy 1900 to 1975". Linoln, NE. USA: Universe Inc., (2003).

⁴ Quartey, P. "Migration and Development: Challenges and Opportunities for serving countries, Ghana Country case study". A Report Prepared for the German Marshal Fund of the USA, Washington, (2006).

⁵ Oyefara, J. L., "Philosophical, Methodological and Ethnical issues in migration and urbanization studies". In Oyefara, J. L, ed, *Migration and Urbanization in contemporary Nigeria: Policy issues and challenges*. University of Lagos Press and Bookshop Ltd. Lagos, (2016),

On the other hand, the global migrant origin database estimates that the emigrants from Nigeria were put at 1,041,284. Sudan is most targeted by Nigerians with 24% of the total emigration population followed by the United States (14%) and the United Kingdom (9%)⁶. These migratory configurations provide environment for both crime, development and criminality exchange from where various variants of banditry and related crime emanated within and beyond cross boarder ungoverned space. This space is a social construction situated within those spaces without control nor regulation of social action. This construct is a meaning that finds reality in the work of Berger and Luckman's "**Social constructionist**" theory.⁷

It demonstrates how meanings of state incapacity to extract legal compliance from a given territorial space it has ownership claim to. This means a space with zero control and regulation of social action. As a fact reflecting how different meanings are socially constructed through interaction and mental processing and given to varieties of social reality in the society, social constructionist theory explains the underpin of system failure but not the societal response to it. Hence, the inclusion theory of "**Social disorganization**" by Robert martins drawn from Anomie theory of Emile Durkheim⁸ to address the underpins for lawlessness reflecting armed banditry, uncontrol and unregulated traffic and use of fire arms- SALW. Beyond the underpins of criminality, is yet, another gap of socialisation and orientation the criminal is exposed to or grow up from.

This theoretical gap is addressed by Robert Merton. Building on Durkheim's perspective, he drew up a pedagogical analogy typical of social strain arising from a society that lost total control of the behaviour of its members and described it as disorganised. He posited that in the event of the collapse of social norms and morality representing collective sentiment in any society, social disorganization ensues such that members of the society prioritise survival through any of these various means including conformity, retreatism, rebellion and innovation. This position connects the network of collaborations that sustain the supply chain and value utilisation of banditry and surge in SALW. Also, the **Social Differentiation** theory by Edwin Sutherland finds expression in this connection. First, in the state incapacity to regulate and control her citizens.

⁶ Ahmadu, H., "Insight into the dynamics and menace of cattle rustling: A case study of Lake Chad Basin Area in Northern Nigeria". *World Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Pp: 18-33. (2019).

⁷ Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T., "The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge". Garden City, NY: Anchor. (1991).

⁸ Ibid¹

Secondly, it addresses the connections, cutting across socialisation, orientation, imitation, linkages, networks and collaborations involved in lawless act of banditry and proliferation of SALW. These appropriate the production, supply, distributions channels and utilisation chain engaged by different gangs get socialised in the society.

Efforts by the state to enforce available legal framework that control and regulate the distribution and use of SALW has not yield commensurate success as the incidences of armed banditry continue unabated resulting in shades of violent attacks and intimidations and ungoverned spaces scattered to provide cover and incentive to continue living with and exhibiting criminal tendencies. It is a common occurrence to experience cattle rustling, kidnapping, armed robbery, raids on villages or settlements and indiscriminate killings, sexual and gender-based violence, among others.

However, while there is unrestrained global concern and research on banditry and the surge of SALW that target actionable solution, researchers have only glossed over interrogating the contextual issues underpinning banditry and proliferation of SALW in Zamfara State particularly Shinkafi and Zurmi LGA. Hence, the focus of this proposal is to examine the Consequences of Banditry and Possession of SALW in Shinkafi and Zurmi LGA, Zamfara State (2019-2023). Whereas global concerns are essential for throwing a searchlight on the problem, and for generating the necessary political will by the international community, but the nature and local knowledge, responses and solutions are crucial to critically engage, if global concerns are to lead to an amelioration of local solution. Arising from the foregoing are the following research questions:

Research Objectives

This study seeks to:

1. Examine the nature of armed banditry that feeds from the proliferation of SALW.
2. Interrogate the local concerns contribution to the proliferation of SALW attracting armed bandits.

Materials and Methods: Using Berger and Luckman`s social constructionist, social disorganisation by Robert martins drawn from Anomie theory of Emile Durkheim and Social Differentiation Theory by Edwin Sutherland ⁹ as a theoretical framework, the study adopted exploratory design involving thematic tabulation and transcription and

⁹ Ibid¹¹

content analysis of qualitative data gathered using interviews, focus group discussion and case study. Non-participant observation involving case-by-case content analyses of criminal precedents form the interpretive background that beefed up the primary data and provided a more robust primary and secondary data interpretation. The need for in-depth knowledge and knowing the exchange and networking pattern of SALW and banditry informed the choice of theory and designs for the study. Purposive sampling adopted to ensure that only those interviewees with relevant experiential and professional knowledge of the issues of concern to the study are involved. In-depth interview (IDI), key informant interview (KII), focus group discussion (FGD) and content analysis of case-by-case relevant precedents constitute sources of primary data to be analysed ethnographically through diligent editing, coding and transcription. While thirty (30) interviews will be conducted, fifteen (15) each for IDI and KII, six (6) FGD will be conducted across the two LGA, three (3) each.

Results

The focus of this section is to present thematic analysis of major findings followed by critical interpretation that connects primary data with secondary. The themes are in line with the research questions and objectives that underscore the research gap set out to fill by the study.

Table 1: Nature and trajectory of armed banditry and proliferation of SALW

Research construct	Instrument	Response
Poor Intelligence gathering	KII	When you see something, say something, best early warning that provide better proactive intervention not reactionary.
Fear of unknown	IDI	There is decline of public confidence in law enforcement and legal framework against insurgency.

The above data indicating the nature and trajectory of armed banditry and proliferation of SALW, point to the works that resonate¹⁰ submission that Nigeria's global ranking along these dimensions is a consequence of the debilitating state of intelligence

¹⁰ Egwu, S. "The political economy of rural banditry in contemporary Nigeria". In Kuna, M.J. and Ibrahim, J. (Eds.). *Rural Banditry and Conflicts in Northern Nigeria*, Abuja: Centre of Democracy and Development, Pp: 14-67. (2015).

gathering, fear of the unknown, poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy, all of which are compounded by the failure of democratic governance and state inadequacies. Consequent to the foregoing is the most visible impacts of armed banditry in Nigeria involving internal displacement of community residents. According to a 2019 report issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Nigerian Government, over 200,000 persons were internally displaced in several communities of Zamfara State, Katsina and Sokoto States between January-August 2019.¹¹ The provision of humanitarian assistance for the displaced persons and communities was a complex humanitarian challenge due to the large number of communities affected. Factors arising from irregular and/or zero food distribution, inappropriate shelters, poor medical services and facilities, among others, were evident in some internally displaced camps in the host states. Similarly, a survey conducted in some assessed locations have revealed that 70% of the displaced population expressed irregular food distribution at the IDP camps.¹² A challenge for these outstanding IDPs is how to return to their communities having lost their properties and livelihood from violent attacks and fears of reoccurrence.

Table 2: Nature and trajectory of armed banditry and proliferation of SALW

Research construct	Instrument	Response
Weak state control	KII	Compromised law enforcement system provide ground for crime to fester.
Public discouragement	IDI	There is decline of public confidence in law enforcement and legal framework against insurgency.

The data above reflect weak control, regulation representing incapacity and public discouragement as endemic nature and trajectory of surge in banditry and gun-running. This unregulated proliferation of SALW present the environment for property and human insecurity largely defines the nature of banditry in Nigeria. In corroboration,¹³ submit, that human security shares the conceptual space of the people-centric approach to human development punctured by surging insecurity. Thus, central to the idea of human security are two important concerns: freedom from fear intended to indicate

¹¹ Ibid⁹

¹² Abiodun, F., "Democracy and national identities: The travails of national security in Nigeria". *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, Vol. 9, NO. 2, Pp: 126-140. (2012).

¹³ Ibid²

freedom from violence, and freedom from want, which is intended to indicate freedom from poverty.

Table 3: Local concerns that contribute to armed banditry and proliferation of SALW

Research construct	Instrument	Response
Nomadic culture	IDI	Seasonal movement and contact between pastoralist and sedentary farmers breed conflict, banditry and possession of arms for self-defense.
Local blacksmith/hunting/festival	KII	There are scattered ungoverned spaces where locals fabricate SALW outside the reach of law enforcement and legal framework against insurgency. Local hunting/festivities is part of life that can groom bandit and increase use of SALW.
Family dislocation	IDI	Local communal lifestyle is fast disappearing and that threatens family bond social capital and control.

Table 3 shows that nomadism, local blacksmiths, hunting, festivity and family dislocation within the society as a reflection of people’s ways of life contribute and explain the local concerns that contribute to the surge in banditry, trafficking and use of SALW. This finding find expression in the work of Curott, affirming that the cost of banditry resonates from the four categories as explained below. 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. In the same vein,

Currott and Fink ¹⁴ explore the havoc, family dislocation as a local concern, causes 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.

Table 4: Local concerns that support armed banditry and proliferation of SALW

Research construct	Instrument	Response
Poverty/illiteracy	KII	Economic and mental poverty destroy social control and foist impunity to criminality.
Local vigilantism/gun carrying culture	FGD, KII and IDI	The informal community defense system of vigilantism and the culture prescribing the use of gun for coronations and festivities supports the use of gun and gun culture. The consequence includes insurgency and circulation of SALW.

The data above showcase poverty, illiteracy, vigilantism as well as gun carrying cultural festivities as local experiences that support banditry, and surge in gun running. This result is confirmed by Adepoju and Wiel ¹⁵ who opined that in the face of the general poverty, illiteracy of citizens of African states, most large and expanding cities simply cannot cope with the management problems associated of illusion related to rational choice of what to do and what not to do. To this end, economic and mental poverty hold sway subverting social control, impunity and criminality.

Furthermore, the informal community defense system of vigilantism and the culture prescribing the use of gun for coronations and festivities supports the use of gun and gun culture. The consequence includes insurgency and circulation of SALW corroborates Kabuiru ¹⁶; Mohammed & Ibrahim,¹⁷ positions that local vigilantism/gun

¹⁴ Currott, N. A. & Fink, A., "Bandit heroes: Social, mythical or rational?" *The American Journal of Economics & Sociology*. Retrieved 23/04/23 from: www.ssm.com/abstract-1582823/. (2010).

¹⁵ Adepoju, A and Vander Wiel, A. "Seeking greener pasture abroad." Ibadan: Safari Books Ltd. (2010).

¹⁶ Kabuiru, A. "Why Banditry Persist" in Adewole, H and Ibrahim, S, (eds). *Challenges of Insecurity in Northern Nigeria*. Kaduna: Pacesetter Publishing. (2020).

¹⁷ Mohammed, J. K. & Ibrahim, J (Eds.). *Rural banditry and conflicts in Northern Nigeria*. Centre for Democracy and Development. (2015).

carrying culture are not helping matter in the effort to stop banditry and gun-running that have exacerbated livestock rustling in the area. Large-scale cattle raids are the specialty of a tribe of livestock bandits in states like Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara, and Kebbi. Even yet, some of these cattle rustler gangs have ties to both local and foreign syndicates; a large number of them are mercenaries employed by Boko Haram. The rustling of livestock provides a substantial source of money for the terror group.

Table 5: Local concerns that support armed banditry and proliferation of SALW

Research construct	Instrument	Response
Weak or absence of legal framework	KII, IDI	Weak and unclear legal framework against armed banditry, traffic and use of arms support the menace.
Compromised justices' system	Case study, KII, FGD	The declining public confidence in the judicial system supports insurgency, traffic and use of arms.
Natural resources	Case study, FGD	Un-manned, unregulated exploration and exploitation of extensive deposits mineral wealth, support lawlessness.

The above data show weak or absence of legal framework, compromised justices' system and Natural resources as local concerns hindering the war against banditry and gun trafficking and use. Literature is replete with recurrent rural banditry in northwest Nigeria largely fueled by the unregulated mining and small arms businesses run by local and foreign interests. Artisans and illegal miners have brought bandits to a place like Zamfara, where they have been pillaging mining sites for gold and money.

Also, experts observed that the federal administration has admitted that there seems to be a link between rural banditry and cases of illegal mining Kaburu¹⁸; Mohammed & Ibrahim¹⁹. The current socio-existential factors in northwest Nigeria aggravate the security situation there. In rural areas, there is little regulation of the pastoral business, compromised justice system and weak or absence of legal framework. These complex setbacks complicate drive to stop or at least control widespread use of guns in the region and unauthorised artisanal mining. The foregoing combines with forests

¹⁸ Adams, O. K. The Role of information technology in national security: A case study of Nigeria. *Global Journal of Computer Science and Technology*. Vol. 16, No. 3, Pp: 6-14. (2016).

¹⁹ Ibid²¹

situated close to the numerous porous borderlines along the region's borders. So, borders are poorly defined, under-policed, and poorly administered. This leads to a great deal of illegal behaviour, which is often enabled by criminal syndicates.

Discussion of Major Findings

Drawing from tables one to five as interpreted, the two research questions and objectives below are guides to the interviewers questions and interviewees answers in order to fill the gap earlier stated in the statement of problem dwelt on the nature of trajectory and local concerns characterising armed banditry and proliferation of SALW in parts of Zamfara State with wider implication.

A KII interviewee had this to say:

Through giving information to the traditional community security structure, threats to security can be addressed. In contrast, the locals out of fear, withhold report of security threat within their communities to security agencies due to absence of confidence despite the heightened campaign in favour of “when you see something say something”²⁰

Similarly, another KII in support posited thus:

The fear of the unknown result into lack of trust between the locals and the law enforcement agencies resulting in poor intelligence gathering and gun running activities.²¹

The above data put together, surmise apparently, a professional assessment, that the factor of fear and loss of confidence in both formal and informal agents of law enforcement systems contribute largely, to the choice of not reporting observed incidents of arm bearing, use, circulation and banditry that escalate to complicate security situation in Zamfara State and beyond by implication.

It follows, therefore, that the deteriorating security situation in Nigeria is a product of fear and lack of confidence in the security system as buttressed by scholars Fayeye ²²

²⁰ KII/Elderly man/ Christian Priest//clergy/63years /Shinkafi /20th April 2024

²¹ KII/Elderly man/ Muslim Priest//clergy/57years /Shinkafi /20th April 2024

²² Ibid¹⁶

and Egwu.²³ They agree that human security should if not for fear and loss of confidence, share the conceptual space of the people-centric approach to control and regulation. Egwu²⁴ added that to ensure human security, human beings (majority) must be the 'vital core', with a 'fundamental set of functions related to survival, livelihood and dignity' as the irreducible minimum. Banditry, ownership, use and proliferation of SALW get determined when the right conception and perception of security are in place.

Buttressing this finding is the opinion of Osimen and Akintunde²⁵ and Rufai²⁶ that the causal factors for banditry and terrorism differ access to SALW that contribute to the extent of exploring locally, capacity deficit of the state that renders it fragile or weak evident in human rights abuses, inequality, fear, lack of confidence and poor service provision and unemployment. In a similar twist, another interviewee had this to say:

Bandits operate freely because system of control and law enforcement is often compromised and weak. This challenge is about the strongest incentive locally encouraging banditry and proliferation of SALW.²⁷

Moreover, another interviewee also observed thus:

Seeming decline in effective enforcement of legal framework against banditry, wielding, possession of arms and its use have discouraged public confidence in government commitment to control and regulate use and circulation of arms and banditry.²⁸

According to the above data, the incidents of unregulated flow/traffic of SALW and banditry heightened because control and law enforcement systems are considered compromised. This largely, pose challenge to containing the menace of increasing arm struggle and trafficking. Extant literature suggests for instance, that in most of Nigeria's rural villages plenty of opportunity for criminal activities abound simply because of weak state capacity to address issues of insecurity. In affirmation to the

²³ Ibid¹³

²⁴ Ibid²⁷

²⁵ Osimen, G. U. & Akintunde, B.A. "SALW proliferation and problem of national security in Nigeria". *International Affairs and Global Strategy*, Vol. 29, Pp: 12-20. (2015).

²⁶ Rufai, M.A. 'Vigilante groups and rural banditry in Zamfara State': Excesses and contradictions. *Internal. Journal of Humanities and Social Science Inventions*, Vol. 7, No. 6, Pp: 69. (2018).

²⁷ IDI/woman/ town union member /68years /Zurmi/19th April 2024

²⁸ IDI/ Female/57 years old / Farmer/Women leader/ Shinkafi/29th April 2024

foregoing, International Crisis Group Report ²⁹ although most communities are well inside the remote ends of the hinterland, it evidenced that inhabitant here are most vulnerable to banditry and arm struggle due to little or no government presence. These scholars both agree that the situation is worsening with the absence of effective community police systems capable of managing the particular security challenges found in the hinterlands.³⁰

The widespread contagious socio-existential risk of having weapons indiscriminately in the hands of non-state actors points to endangering the peace and security of both indigenes and settlers in any community. In most rural areas, where there is little regulation of the pastoral business, under-policed, and poorly administered, a great deal of illegal behavior, which is often enabled by criminal syndicates are sustained. In particular, local artisans' device various means to survive such as gun making and gun running. On the heal of this, some interviewees posit thus:

Well, nomadic lifestyle or culture is related to hunting and gathering. Local hunters are some local iron fabricators who also produce and sell guns and light weapons. This put into perspective, translates into fabricated SALW meant for subsistent hunting of wild animal have contributed in the increasing circulation and distribution of fabricated weapons that has heightened conflicts and criminal activities in the area.³¹

Further, another interviewee says:

The dislocation of family system by the unequal integration of local socio-economic and political realities to the global knowledge economy has weaken social relations and control. Parenting has gone commercialised into foster system of nanism. The effect of this is a drastic erosion of communal bonding that subvert indigenous values as the nucleus of social control and solidarity. The hitherto communal life style got infiltrated by mechanical solidarity instead of organic solidarity³²

²⁹ International Crisis Group Report. *Violence in Nigeria's North-West: Rolling Back the Mayhem*. African Report: Brussels; Belgium. (2020).

³⁰ Nadama, M. C. 'Armed Banditry and Internal Security in Zamfara State'. *International Journal of Scientific and Engineering Research* Vol.10, No. 8, Pp: 1219-1225. (2020)

³¹ IDI/ Female/57 years old / Farmer/Women leader/ Shinkafi/29th April 2024

³² IDI/Male/70 years old / Farmer/Opinion leader/ Zurmi/9th April 2024

Furthermore, another has this to say:

They are using the arms for hunting, drumming and display of arms during yearly festivals (Sallah) by the followers of traditional institutions contribute to illegal circulation of arms and bandits' cash in on this to access arms for criminal activities.³³

Nomadism is akin to hunting and gathering as the above data affirm not leaving out the central historic influence that hunting had on local evolution of nomadic life as fundamental to clash of interest among nomads, whether it is pastorals (herders), sedentary (subsistent farmers) or hunting bands (forest rangers) operating within the forest space as platform for banditry, owning and use of firearm as a survival strategy and self-protection in the jungle. Sadly, this interaction isolates and criminalise indiscriminately actors in the jungle. Consequently, there is false beliefs about the difficulties herders bring upon themselves by seemingly choosing a traditional lifestyle, which limits their ability to be creative and flexible³⁴ Little wonder, pastoralists are seen negatively and are frequently held responsible for issues pertaining to crop damage, farming along cow paths, and water availability. As Bello & Abdullahi,³⁵ succinctly put it, the perception of nomadic Fulani herders as violent people is common. Viewpoints such as the cow complex and the tragedy of the commons in the pastoralism literature serve to support the inclination to hold nomadic herders accountable for the issues they bring as a professional group. Another participant interviewee has this to say:

Poverty and ignorance feed significantly evolution of banditry, criminality and arm struggle. When poor people are inadequately informed, some activate various means for survival including banditry and gun running³⁶.

The above data resonates Egwu's³⁷ observation drawn from the disappointing ranking of Nigeria been engrossed by the debilitating state of poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy, all of which complicate and reflect weak state capacity to sustain democratic

³³ KII/ Female/67 years old /Teacher/Women leader/ Shinkafi/22th April 2024

³⁴ Clunan, A. L., & Trinkunas, H. A. (Eds.). *Ungoverned Spaces: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty*. Stanford University Press. (2010).

³⁵ Bello, B & Abdullahi M. M. *Farmers–Herdsmen Conflict, Cattle Rustling, and Banditry: The Dialectics of Insecurity in Anka and Maradun Local Government Area of Zamfara State, Nigeria*. (<https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/open-access-at-sage>). SAGE Open. (2021).

³⁶ KII/ Male/49 years old /Lawyer/Youth leader/ Zurmi/28th April 2024

³⁷ Ibid³⁶

ethos that ensure security of lives and property. Hence, he concluded that armed banditry associated with cattle rustling, kidnapping, robbery, and other forms of violent crimes are on the rise, with aggressors motivated largely by economic and commercial motives. This underpins the increasing market space that fuel underground economy of the proliferation of SALW. An interviewee has this to say:

In our community we use local arms by vigilante and hunters. Vigilantism and lack of control over its activities contributes to the proliferation of arms, conflict and banditry in this community. For anybody to carry arms, there is need for proper licensing and documentation.³⁸

In addition, an interviewee has this to say:

It is a cultural tradition during festivals for youths and entourage of traditional authorities like monarch or title holders to allow the display of varieties of weapons as a showcase of strength, gallantry and authority to the public spectators. The fact that the youths are involve in this parade definitely provides opportunity and incentive that entrench owning, possession and use of arms by individuals. The tendency that some of these owners of weapon will use it for crime, self-defense or show of their personal strength and ego is high³⁹.

Further, another interviewee reveals thus:

The local communities use arms traditionally for the purpose of hunting and during festivals. Yes, during yearly festival fir Sallah traditional institution display arms. Through local hunting during festivals, criminality and non-care attitude by the entire community members. During this festivals, emir's entourage display arms as a symbol of strength of the Shinkafi emirate.⁴⁰

³⁸ KII/Elderly man/ Earth Priest//clergy/71years /Shinkafi /10th April 2024

³⁹ KII/ Male/49 years old /Lawyer/Politician/ Zurmi/28th April 2024

⁴⁰ IDI/Elderly Woman/ Farmers/member women union executive/60years /Shinkafi/19th April 2024

Again, another interviewee extended the conversation by observing that:

Hunting in communities in Zamfara state is another popular culture of the people. For decades carrying arms by hunters in search of wild animals for food and commercial purpose is cultural and traditional. The clash of interest among hunters and others is regular occurrence. Banditry evolved from this clash of interest whether in the bush or outside. Spontaneous attacks generate insecurity that is often labeled terrorism.⁴¹

Other discussants corroborate the above data when they surmised thus:

The majority of discussants agreed to the informal use of fire arms was for traditional hunting culture and festivity in Zamfara State.⁴²

Yet, others discussants say:

All the discussants agreed the local community use fire arms during hunting before the emerging of bandits who dominate the bush.⁴³

Hunting and gathering is as old as human creation. The above data did not disproof this but buttressed it. Generally, in most indigenous communities, festivities usually drum up well organised and mapped display of organic solidarity until recently when some of them have taken the form of restive mechanical solidarity where indiscriminate arms display and banditry are often experienced. Also, Bello & Abdullahi,⁴⁴ captured aptly, the place of label that nomadic group is solely responsible for all that support gunrunning and banditry is fallacious. Viewpoints such as this suggest begging the question rather than answering the question of solution and control of insecurity around the illegal ownership, use and circulation of firearm. It is also a noted position scholarly espoused that in any festive or social gathering, there is transactional tendencies to trade in trouble and illegalities so as to create uncertainty that of criminalise the sometimes-innocent victims⁴⁹. An interviewee further reveal thus:

⁴¹ IDI/Elderly Man/ Farmers/Town union executive/70years /Zurmi/11th April 2024

⁴² FGD/ Male/69 years old /Hunter group leader/Politician/ Zurmi/29th April 2024

⁴³ FGD/ Woman/69 years old /market women group/women leader/ Zurmi/29th April 2024

⁴⁴ Ibid³⁹

The justle for unregulated mining and hunting space ownership and control generate conflict that contribute to illegal ownership, use and wielding of fire arms among local hunters, state and nonstate interested actors that snow-balls into conflict, banditry, and the proliferation of SALW.⁴⁵

In addition, another interviewee posits thus:

Lack of standard legal frame work and the culture support use of local arms for the purpose of hunting not to engage in any criminal activities. Yes, during festival of Sallah.⁴⁶

Yet, another further opines thus:

The near absence of a clear demarcation between formal and informal authority in terms of a definite legal framework to define, detect, arrest, prosecute and punish banditry, possession and use of fire arms in Zamfara complicate efforts at regulation and control.⁴⁷

The above data largely indict the state capacity and institutional failure. What is normal is that except legally authorised, citizens are not permitted by law to own, use or display firearms of any kind. However, in most rural climes particularly in northwest Nigeria especially Zamfara banditry is further fueled by the unregulated mining and small arms businesses.⁴⁸ Artisanal and illegal miners have transported bandits to parts in Zamfara as protection to enable operations within the pillaging mining sites for gold and money. It is a common knowledge that connection exists between rural banditry and illegal mining by literature and data from the field.⁴⁹

It is supportive therefore, to observe that government ended its mining operations in Zamfara State since 2019. Transhumance: relatedly, because of unregulated cattle transportation, it is easy for criminals to infiltrate, and traffic arms which has exacerbated SALW proliferation, banditry and livestock rustling in the area. There is increasing cattle raid incidents of livestock bandits in states like Kaduna, Katsina,

⁴⁵ KII/ Male/59 years old /Retired law enforcement/Police/ Shinkafi/15th April 2024

⁴⁶ KII/ Male/75 years old /Retired law enforcement/Soldier/lawyer/ Shinkafi/15th April 2024

⁴⁷ IDI/Men/ town union member /64years /Zurmi/17th April 2024

⁴⁸ Ibid¹⁵

⁴⁹ Getzoff, M., "World's safest countries, 2019". Available at: Global Finance. Accessed from: www.gfmag.com/global-data/non-economic-data/world-s-safest-countries-2019/ accessed on 26/01/2021. (2019).

Zamfara, and Kebbi. Even. Notwithstanding, these gangsters synergise with both local and foreign syndicates largely mercenaries engaged by Boko Haram. This cartel provides a significant source of funding for the terror group.⁵⁰ Further explanations of the foregoing drawn from another discussant thus, posits:

I alluded to known fact that there exist uncontrol extensive natural mineral mining activities in Zamfara state as a major cause and incentive for illegal ownership, use and circulation of firearms and banditry. The criminality and insecurity arising from this reflect conflict of space ownership and control lines.⁵¹

Supported by another interviewee:

Most discussant indicted the traditional institution for not adequately regulate its use of arms in festivities and also blamed banditry on the disconnect between formal and informal government authorities identifying, arrest, prosecution and punishment of offenders.⁵²

Yet, another supports:

Although majority of the discussants agreed that arms are usually displayed during festivals, they also observed that no local culture outrightly supports SALW circulation in Zamfara State, but the escalating criminality and insecurity pervading the state because of clash of interest.⁵³

The above data replicates the nuances evident in extant literature that when organic solidarity evolves into mechanical solidarity, there is conflict of interests that strains human conducts and relations. Little wonder, Olaniyan, A & Yahaya⁵⁴ noted that the availability of small arms and instances of armed insurgency affect the provision by both governmental and non-governmental groups to engage and provide essential social services particularly security. Most time times, field employees of these development organisations face criminals as victims of attacks by armed bandits. The

⁵⁰ Ibid³⁴

⁵¹ FGD/Elderly man/ herders group leader/ 60years and above/Retired Pam Sec. Geologist/Shinkafi/25th April 2024

⁵² FGD/Elderly woman/member farm produce association/60years and above /Zurma/5th April 2024

⁵³ FGD/Elderly man/ Youth group/ 64years and above/Zurmi/14th April 2024

⁵⁴ Olaniyan, A & Yahaya, A. 'Cows, bandits, and violent conflicts: Understanding cattle rustling in Northern Nigeria'. Africa Spectrum, Vol. 3, Pp: 93–105 Palgrave Handbook of small arms and conflicts in Africa. Palgrave macmillan. (2016)

consequence of this unmitigated attacks is to relocate to safer region with conducive business environment without threat to their investment and performance that justifies continued funding of development as against areas where there are rising levels of insecurity.

Discussion Summary

The study provides insight on the effect of fear and declining confidence in law enforcement and government commitment to legally control agencies and institutions responsible for the regulation of fire arm ownership, use, production and circulation. This has affected crime report and statistics that further distort intelligence gathering in the community to enable proactive intervention against bandits and gun running actors. The study indicts government capacity to provide realistic and responsive legal framework to regulate hunting, nomadism, festivities, vigilantism and mining in parts of Nigeria especially Zanfara State having extensive solid mineral deposit. It was discovered that largely, the hitherto existing organic solidarity has evolved rapidly into mechanical solidarity with individualism at the centre instead of community.

The foregoing is not unconnected with the unequal integration of local communal and subsistent lifestyle with economically globalised institution-based cosmology that has dislocated family bond, communal morality and social control. Consequently, poverty and ignorance arising from the mismatch between communalism and globalism present social disorganization compelling all sorts of alternatives as way to survive including banditry and gun running. Banditry spread the trade in arms, use and ownership of SALW for self-survival and protection. Again, the study provides basis that suggest absence of demarcation in roles and responsibility of formal and informal authority in parts of the country particularly Zamfara State.

Conclusion

Poor intelligent gathering, fear of the unknown, weak state control, public discouragement, nomadic culture, local blacksmith/hunters/festival, family dislocation, poverty/illiteracy, vigilantism, natural resources, weak or absence of legal framework and compromised justice system add to exacerbate surge in armed banditry, traffic and illegal use of SALW in Shinkafi and Zurmi LGA of Zamfara State.

Recommendations

1. There is a need for inclusive governance that guarantees equal access to justice and clear demarcation in role and responsibility of formal and informal leadership authority.
2. Access and use of all national asset need to be clearly regulated according to the laws of the land.
3. There is a need for transparent good governance to ensures that law enforcement and punishment reflect the constitution judicial best practice.

Bibliography

- Abiodun, F., (2012). "Democracy and national identities: The travails of national security in Nigeria". *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, Vol. 9, NO. 2, Pp: 126-140.
- Adams, O. K. (2016). The Role of information technology in national security: A case study of Nigeria. *Global Journal of Computer Science and Technology*. Vol. 16, No. 3, Pp: 6-14.
- Adepoju, A. & Vander Wiel, A. (2010). "Seeking greener pasture abroad." Ibadan: Safari Books Ltd.
- Ahmadu, H., (2019). "Insight into the dynamics and menace of cattle rustling: A case study of Lake Chad Basin Area in Northern Nigeria". *World Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Pp: 18-33.
- Azam, J.P. & F. Gubert. (2006). "Migrants Remittances and the household in Africa: A Review of the Evidence". *Journal of African Economies*, Vol. 15 AERC Supplements 2, pp 426-462.
- Bello, B & Abdullahi M. M. (2021). Farmers–Herdsmen Conflict, Cattle Rustling, and Banditry: The Dialectics of Insecurity in Anka and Maradun Local Government Area of Zamfara State, Nigeria. (<https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/open-access-at-sage>). SAGE Open,
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T., (1991). "The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge". Garden City, NY: Anchor.
- Block, A & Chimienti, M., (2012). "Irregular Migration in a globalizing world. In Block A and Chimienti, M (eds) *Irregular Migrants: Policy, Politics, Motives and Everyday lives: Ethnic and Racial Studies*", Oxon, New York: Routledge. Pp: 1-15,
- Clunan, A. L., & Trinkunas, H. A. (2010). (Eds.). *Ungoverned Spaces: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty*. Stanford University Press.

- Currott, N. A. & Fink, A., (2010). “Bandit heroes: Social, mythical or rational?” *The American Journal of Economics & Sociology*. Retrieved 23/04/23 from: www.ssrn.com/abstract-1582823/.
- Dajahar, D.L. & Alheri, D.W. (2018). “A theoretical framework for human security in West Africa”. *FULAFIA Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 1, No.3, Pp: 59-70.
- Egwu, S. (2015). “The political economy of rural banditry in contemporary Nigeria”. In Kuna, M.J. and Ibrahim, J. (Eds.). *Rural Banditry and Conflicts in Northern Nigeria*, Abuja: Centre of Democracy and Development, Pp: 14-67.
- Fayeye, J. O. (2010). “Security sector management and peace processes in Nigeria”, in Albert, I.O. and Oloyede, I.O. (Eds). *Dynamics of Peace Process*, Ilorin: Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies, Pp:523-527.
- Getzoff, M. (2019). “World’s safest countries, 2019”. Available at: Global Finance. Accessed from: www.gfmag.com/global-data/non-economic-data/world-s-safest-countries-2019/ accessed on 26/01/2021.
- International Crisis Group Report. (2020). *Violence in Nigeria’s North-West: Rolling Back the Mayhem*. African Report: Brussels; Belgium.
- Kabuiru, A. (2020). “Why Banditry Persist”in Adewole, H and Ibrahim, S, (eds). *Challenges of Insecurity in Northern Nigeria*. Kaduna: Pacesetter Publishing.
- Mgbeafulu, M. C., (2003). “Migration and the economy: Igbo migrants and the Nigerian economy 1900 to 1975”. Lincoln, NE. USA: Universe Inc.,
- Mohammed, J. K. & Ibrahim, J. (2015). (Eds.). *Rural banditry and conflicts in Northern Nigeria*. Centre for Democracy and Development.
- Nadama, M. C. (2020). ‘Armed Banditry and Internal Security in Zamfara State’. *International Journal of Scientific and Engineering Research* Vol.10, No. 8, Pp: 1219-1225.
- Olaniyan, A & Yahaya, A. (2016). ‘Cows, bandits, and violent conflicts: Understanding cattle rustling in Northern Nigeria’. *Africa Spectrum*, Vol. 3,

Pp: 93–105 Palgrave Handbook of small arms and conflicts in Africa. Palgrave Macmillan.

Oyefara, J. L., (2016). “Philosophical, Methodological and Ethical issues in migration and urbanization studies”. In Oyefara, J. L, ed, *Migration and Urbanization in contemporary Nigeria: Policy issues and challenges*. University of Lagos Press and Bookshop Ltd. Lagos.

Osimen, G. U. & Akintunde, B.A. (2015). “SALW proliferation and problem of national security in Nigeria”. *International Affairs and Global Strategy*, Issue 29, Pp: 12-20.

Quartey, P. (2006). “Migration and Development: Challenges and Opportunities for serving countries, Ghana Country case study”. A Report Prepared for the German Marshal Fund of the USA, Washington,

Rufai, M.A. (2018). ‘Vigilante groups and rural banditry in Zamfara State’: Excesses and contradictions. *Internal. Journal of Humanities and Social Science Inventions*, Vol. 7, No. 6, Pp: 69.

Primary Data (Interviews & Focus group discussion)

In-Depth Interviews (IDI)

1. IDI/Men/ town union member /64years /Zurmi/17th April 2024
2. IDI/woman/ town union member /68years /Zurmi/19th April 2024
3. IDI/ Female/57 years old / Farmer/Women leader/ Shinkafi/29th April 2024
4. IDI/ Female/57 years old / Farmer/Women leader/ Shinkafi/29th April 2024
5. IDI/Male/70 years old / Farmer/Opinion leader/ Zurmi/9th April 2024
6. IDI/Elderly Woman/ Farmers/member women union executive/60years /Shinkafi/19th April 2024
7. IDI/Elderly Man/ Farmers/Town union executive/70years /Zurmi/11th April 2024

Key Informant Interviews (KII)

8. KII/Elderly man/ Christian Priest//clergy/63years /Shinkafi /20th April 2024
9. KII/Elderly man/ Muslim Priest//clergy/57years /Shinkafi /20th April 2024
10. KII/ Female/67 years old /Teacher/Women leader/ Shinkafi/22th April 2024
11. KII/ Male/49 years old /Lawyer/Youth leader/ Zurmi/28th April 2024

12. KII/Elderly man/ Earth Priest//clergy/71years /Shinkafi /10th April 2024
13. KII/ Male/49 years old /Lawyer/Politician/ Zurmi/28th April 2024
14. KII/ Male/59 years old /Retired law enforcement/Police/ Shinkafi/15th April 2024
15. KII/ Male/75 years old /Retired law enforcement/Soldier/lawyer/ Shinkafi/15th April 2024

Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

16. FGD/ Male/69 years old /Hunter group leader/Politician/ Zurmi/29th April 2024
17. FGD/ Woman/69 years old /market women group/women leader/ Zurmi/29th April 2024
18. FGD/Elderly man/ herders group leader/ 60years and above/Retired Pam Sec. Geologist/Shinkafi/25th April 2024
19. FGD/Elderly woman/member farm produce association/60years and above /Zurma/5th April 2024
20. FGD/Elderly man/ Youth group/ 64years and above/Zurmi/14th April 2024.

Acknowledgments: We are grateful to Tetfund for providing the grant that funded the larger research out of which this paper was produced for publication. Also, deserving our acknowledgment and appreciation, is the NOUN Centre for Research and Administration, its erudite Director, Prof. Sam Ayodele, and other great staff of the directorate. Same appreciation goes to the Director and staff of CEMGS for providing an international platform for the presentation of this research paper and its publication. Above all, we are eternally grateful to our performing Vice Chancellor, Prof. Olufemi Peter, whose management tenacity tailored our skill consciousness to embark on continuous knowledge production ventures like this. Sir, we cannot thank you enough. Thank you.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest relating to this research paper because all data gathered were extracted after obtaining **due consent and approvals** from the interviewees were obtained. The researcher is committed to **confidentiality** of privacy issues concerning the subject of research.