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ROADMAP TO TACKLING INSURGENCY, ARMED BANDITRY AND KIDNAPPING IN THE NORTH WEST REGION OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The North West region's violence has quickly grown into a theatre of wars, spilling into the North Central, forcing more herders southward into the country's Middle Belt and aggravating herder farmer tension not only in affected regions but amongst policy makers and security operatives whose reactive policing style is long overdue for overhauling even as law enforcement agencies are poorly resourced and overstretched. The region's abysmal literacy level, unskilled labour force, ungoverned spaces, overstretched poverty indicators, expanse of porous border and intense competition over land and water between predominantly Fulani herders and mostly Hausa farmers are all the needed catalysts for insurgency, armed banditry, budding jihadist activities, kidnapping and other violent crimes. It is against this background that this study, underpinned by routine activities theory, employed a thematic study approach to assess roadmap to tackling insurgency, armed banditry and kidnapping in the North West region of Nigeria. Findings from the study revealed that deployment of techno driven surveillance, strengthened collaborative efforts of law enforcement agencies and telecoms operators, genuine activation of good governance and adoption of a community participatory policing strategy can significantly reduce insurgency, armed banditry and kidnapping in the North West region. Study submitted that the North West insurgence calls for a multipronged approach with States, Federal and international communities to subdue the armed groups, protect communities across the vast ungoverned territory and exterminate the nexus of jihadist activities so that the region will not become a land bridge connecting Islamic insurgencies in the Central Sahel with the decade-old Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad region of North-Eastern Nigeria.

Keywords: *Insurgency, Armed Banditry, Kidnapping, North West Region, Routine Activities Theory.*

Introduction

It is only the galloping inflation, receding economic development and unabated corruption that can compete with the ever increasing insurgency of kidnapping, armed banditry, drug trafficking, cattle rustling, and arms proliferation in the North West region of Nigeria. The region is quickly

turning into theaters of war involving many armed non state actors, including herder-allied groups, vigilantes, criminal gangs in a violence that has displaced over 200,000 people and killed over 8000 since 2011 (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2016). The insurgency is fanned by competition over resources; now aggravated by climatic change, between predominantly Fulani herders and mostly Hausa farmers. The insurgency thrives amidst a booming organised crime of cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, gang raping, village and market raids of which Jihadist groups are now stepping into to take advantage of the security crisis. All these has greatly retarded productivity and opportunities for the people to earn a living.

With a population of the region put at 41.8million, the region; which comprises of six States such as Jigawa, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara, is one of the most populated Zones and of the largest land mass (NBS, 2012). The region performs very poorly across a range of poverty measures; with an infant mortality rate of 91 infant deaths per 1,000 birth (Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, 2015) against national average of 87 (National Population Commission (NPC), 2008), second highest rate in the country male and female respondents who reported having no educational attainment whatsoever respectively (NPC, 2009). The Zone (except Kaduna) currently has the highest number of out-of-school children in Nigeria (United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF), 2019). While millions of children those who do not attend school at all are in the poorly resourced and ill-supervised Quranic school system, or *almajiranci*.

Beyond all reasonable doubts the above pictures of the North West region set the tones for an all dimensional crimes and criminalities spanning from insurgency, kidnapping, banditry, human trafficking, arms proliferations, radicalization of vulnerable youths, and terrorism. Kidnapping, that was alien to Nigeria until the 1984 botched abduction of Umaru Dikko; a former second republic Minister of Transport, has become a daily phenomenon in the country fueled by the ample monetary benefits the perpetrators enjoy from the crime and the apparent inability of the nation's security operatives to arrest and promptly punish offenders. The entire landscape appears to be under the siege of kidnappers, bandits and terrorists as virtually every part of the country has suffered from the menace.

Pathetically, government responses to these worrisome developments of modern day insurgency of kidnapping, banditry, violent crimes and criminalities in the region has been that of outright

militarization of urban areas leaving the remote areas at the mercy of non state armed actors (Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) and Nigeria Working Group on Armed Violence (NWGAV), 2013). While serious consideration has not been directed at deployment of a techno-driven and satellite based law enforcement agencies, activation of good governance and institutional framework, community oriented policing strategy and collaborative efforts of law enforcement agencies and telecoms operators on curbing insurgency, terrorism, banditry kidnapping and violent crime and criminalities in North West region. It is when these considerations are projected as against militarization that efforts of civil society; alternative dispute resolution, community policing capacity building, curricula for violence prevention in schools, social inclusion, reintegration of perpetrators into the society and trauma counseling, shall be seen complimentary and effective.

Furthermore, combating insurgency in the North West can no longer be approached with reactive and traditional policing strategy, the need to embrace community oriented policing laced with intelligence led strategy cannot be over emphasised as it is these policing strategies that effectively deploy satellite based and techno driven surveillance to unfriendly and unfamiliar terrain with resounding precision in both covert and overt operations (Romaniuk, 2012). This therefore calls for collaborative efforts of all stakeholders; law enforcement agencies (Military, State Service, Nigeria Police, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, and others), National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA) along with all telecommunication providers in the country using technology deployment to stay ahead of insurgency and acts of terrorism to the extent of using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (drones) to execute threats in any parts of the world.

The main objective of this study is to assess the roadmap to tackling insurgency, armed banditry and kidnapping in the North West region. Other specific objectives are to;

- i. Investigates the effect of good governance and institutional framework on curbing insurgency, kidnapping and banditry in North West region.
- ii. Determine the effect of deployment of technology and intelligence resource on curbing insurgency, kidnapping and banditry in North West region
- iii. Examine the effect of community participation and policing strategy on curbing insurgency, kidnapping and banditry in North West region.

- iv. Assess the effect of collaborative efforts of law enforcement agencies and telecoms operators on curbing insurgency, kidnapping and banditry in North West region.

In order to achieve these objectives, this paper sets the following hypotheses to achieve the objectives of this study;

H₀₁: Good governance and institutional framework has no significant effect on curbing insurgency, kidnapping and banditry in North West region.

H₀₂: Deployment of technology and intelligence resource has no significant effect on curbing insurgency, kidnapping and banditry in North West region.

H₀₃: Community participation and policing strategy has no significant effect on curbing insurgency, kidnapping and banditry in North West region.

H₀₄: Collaborative efforts of law enforcement agencies and telecoms operators have no significant effect on curbing insurgency, kidnapping and banditry in North West region.

The results of this work, underpinned by the routine activities theory might be of benefits to security experts, academics, policy makers, food security and developmental experts in examining how to tackle this uprising and social menace in the North West region.

Conceptual Framework Insurgency

This is the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, challenge or nullify political control of a region. From international legal perspective it is seen as a rebellion, carried out by rebels, who are not recognised as belligerents, against a constituted authority or state that has been recognized by the United Nations. It is also seen as a form of rebellion in which a dissident group that has the support of a sizeable portion of the population instigates widespread acts of governments or to extract political, economic or social concession over a define area. In the security parlance, and appropriate for this study, the term insurgency is any guerrilla, terrorist, militant, revolutionary, or any other form of irregular warfare that does not follow the rules, laws, and conventions of war and is usually carried out against a state.

Kidnapping

This could be difficult to precisely define as it varies from country to country likewise region to region even from state to state. Kidnapping occurs when a person is abducted and taken from one place to another against their will, or a situation in which a person is confined to a controlled

space without the confinement being from a legal authority. Consequently, when the transportation or confinement of the person is done for an unlawful purpose, such as for ransom or for the purpose of committing another crime, the act becomes criminal. Kidnapping is an act of seizing, taking away and keeping a person in custody either by force or fraud.

Banditry

Banditry refers to the incidences of armed robbery or allied violent crimes, such as cattle rustling, village or market raids. It involves the use of force, or threat to effect, or to intimidate a person or a group of persons in order to rob, rape or kill. Economic or political interests motivate banditry. Nigerian tertiary institutions are also fertile breeding grounds for outlaws greatly facilitated by the political class. Such that there exist, the history of competition between university-based confraternities. Competing groups in the politics of University administration also found them useful such that they became a factor in politics (Odinkalu, 2018).

Critical Drivers of Kidnapping and Banditry in North West Region of Nigeria

Predictors of insurgency that keeps aggravating armed banditry, kidnapping, village and market raids, cattle rustling, illicit artisanal gold mining, proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) are the under listed;

Proliferation of Armed Non State Actors

This study rests the violence affecting Nigeria's North West on three major categories of non state actors, whose activities overlap in certain ways;

The first category includes violence pitting mainly ethnic Hausa sedentary farmers and vigilantes acting on their behalf against predominantly Fulani roving herders and associated militias. Nigerian authorities refer to the latter generically as "bandits" These militias operate in a largely decentralised manner under local commanders' autonomous control. They are motivated first and foremost by fighting on behalf of herders in their disputes with farmers, but many rogue elements have taken up criminal activities as well. The second actors are the criminal gangs involved in large-scale cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, pillage, and attacks on gold miners and traders. The authorities sometimes also refer to these gangs as "bandits" although this study sees them as "criminal" groups, gangs or organisations. These groups are mix of individuals from Fulani, Hausa and other ethnic origins, and seek to enrich themselves rather than to advance a political or ideological project. Identifiable groups belonging to notorious 'Yellow', Dan Makaranta and Kachalla do not operate like militias; they are neither cohesive nor

under a centralised command. They also act autonomously, sometimes in rivalry with one another. While the third non state armed actors which is of worrisome and most recent dimension of the violence involves confrontations between law enforcement agencies and jihadist groups that are increasingly active in the region. These militia fighters, criminals and Islamist insurgents exist across north-western Nigeria, in number in excess of ten thousand (ICG, 2020).

Ungoverned Spaces in the North West

Crime thrives in remote locations where the presence of government is not registered such that there's little deterrence and abounding opportunities for criminal activity. Most of the North West communities or households are in some cases separated by and interspersed with forest areas. This renders them vulnerable to banditry. This situation is made worse by the absence of effective community policing mechanisms capable of addressing the hinterlands' peculiar security challenges. The state security machinery has so far failed to tackle the scourge of banditry due to lack of political will, lack of collaborative efforts and operational challenges.

Unregulated Mining Activities in the North West Region

Another predictor of banditry is the prevailing socio-existential conditions in northwestern Nigeria where the rural pastoral sector is not well regulated. Illicit artisanal mining and the proliferation of arms in the region are also veritable factors. On a worrisome note is the international dimension in which foreigners are found culpable and were given 48hours to leave Zamfara even as Mining association alleges foreigners as Zamfara bandits.

Arms Proliferation in Exchange for Gold in the North West

The international dimension of foreigners exchanging arms for gold evolved many warlords in Zamfara and this further exacerbate the already precarious situation. This development has forced the hands of both state and federal government to evolve a platform of buying off the mined gold from the illegal artisanal miners rather than having it exchanged for gold which further raised the security level of the already fragile region.

Porous Border and Uncontrolled Migration

North West region accounts for two thirds of Nigeria's 1,497km international land border with Niger Republic, this expanse is weakly regulated as communities along the borderline share cultural, religious and historical ties hence, regional protocols on freedom of movement have created opportunities for traffickers, smugglers and criminals in their nefarious activities in firearm, drugs and human trafficking. The recent border closure to stem rice smuggling and

corona virus pandemic had a far reaching effect in controlling illegal border crossing (Reuter, 2020).

Demographic Pressures and Climatic Change

Over recent decades, the far North has seen a substantial shortening in the length of the rainy season aggravating water scarcity and an increase in desert or semi-desert conditions have shrunk both arable land and pasture (National Meteorological Agency, 2008). The region's demographic pressures of rapidly growing population has meanwhile increase demand for available land and in the absence of more efficient methods of both crop and livestock production, the desertification and the population growth have intensified violence and competition for territory suitable for farming and grazing between Hausa farmers and predominantly Fulani pastoralists.

Unemployment

The apparent inability of the federal government albeit state or local government to provide employment for teeming graduates in this 21st century is geometrically is worrisome and all proactive measure engaged by all tiers of government to hold back the unemployment monsters and its menace has failed woefully to the extent that the numbers of unemployed youths both skilful and unskillful continue to increase every day. These make banditry, kidnapping very attractive and tempting making skilful and unskillful youths to become atrocious actors (Suleiman, 2017; Kilishi et al. 2014).

Empirical Review

Good Governance and Institutional Framework and Curbing Insurgency

Ordu (2015) critically investigated kidnapping, security challenges and obstacles to the control of hostage taking in Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative research design. Findings of the study showed that poor governance trends as long as there exists absence of provisions of basic amenities; good roads, hospitals, good schools, modern commercial trading centers and good drinking water system are essential ingredients in the governance of the society. While National Crime Research Centre (2017) employed social control theories to assess emerging crimes and case of kidnappings in Kenya. The study administered snowball sampled questionnaire in twenty randomly selected counties. Quantitative data extracted were analysed and the information was presented in frequency and percentage tables and figures. Findings of the study showed that

creation of employment opportunities is seen as instrumental in the prevention and combat of kidnapping.

Ibrahim and Mukhtar (2017) employed social exchange and lifestyle theories in a qualitative study to investigate the causes and consequences of kidnapping in Nigeria. The study engaged secondary data from extant literature and relevant publications. Findings from the study showed that corruption as an act of bad governance has indirect connection to kidnapping, whereby youth political thugs served corrupt political leaders and turned out to become kidnappers, sometimes for ransom from political opponents. The study carried out by Emanemua and Akinlosotu (2017) examined waves of kidnapping for ransom, its implications and quest for a lasting solution in Nigeria. The study deployed a qualitative research design by extensive review of extant literature and publication in drawing conclusion on the vexed issue of kidnapping. Findings from the study revealed that the Nigeria government needs to take realistic step in its policy decisions to address economic hardship and unemployment problems through good governance at all levels including in non-public enterprises.

Shehu et al. (2017) empirically analysed the menace banditry and cattle rustling in Katsina of North West Nigeria. Results from the study showed that banditry and rustling creates a sense of insecurity with capacity to hamper the productivity of the herding enterprise as loss of cattle to rustlers mean depletion of household income and communal resource of the herding community. While Gadzama et al. (2018) investigated rural banditry in “Kamuku” forest in Birni Gwari local government of area of Kaduna state, and its perceived effects on the rural economy. The study employed purposive sampling technique and descriptive statistics. Results from findings revealed that bandits have negatively and significantly prevented farming, hunting, and firewood hewing and medicinal herbs.

Saidu et al. (2018) thematically examined rise of insecurity and kidnapping in Nigeria with Kaduna State as a case of study. The study engaged in a qualitative study of relevant publications and extant literature to draw conclusions. Revelations from the study showed that good governance through coordinated proactive economic and political policies and programs is a vital tool to stem the economic hardship, political and moral decay which are all predictors of kidnapping and violent crimes that is seen in Kaduna State and Nigeria. While WANEP (2020) examined armed banditry in the North-West of Nigeria. Findings of the study showed that the

disruption in farming by bandit attacks affect agricultural productivity with serious implications for food security as the farming communities were forced to abandon their farms especially areas in proximity to the forest areas which serve as bandits locations to attack communities.

Deployment of Technology and Intelligence Resource and Curbing Insurgency

Ashaolu (2012) in a thematic study assessed solving security challenges in Nigeria through intelligence gathering and surveillance. Findings revealed that policemen are hardly educated portending their job to be a last option for school drop-outs with no other alternatives in life. Study submitted that those trained in special squads; anti-bomb squad, are insufficiently qualified or ill equipped as some lose their lives in the process of trying to detonate bombs because they lack anti-bomb protective suit and other equipments. While Zambri (2013) empirically examined the foundational weakness affecting law enforcement counterterrorism intelligence functions. Findings from the study revealed that National, State and Local law enforcement agencies should embrace techno-driven intelligence analysis training as a critical component of a successful intelligence functioning. Study submitted that certified intelligence analysis course will nationally address gaps in the finished intelligence product which grossly affect the productivity, motivation, and morale of law enforcement intelligence personnel as well as contribute to disparate quality of intelligence products.

CONTEST (2018) empirically investigated the United Kingdom's strategy for countering terrorism by deploying evolving technology, including the use of the internet and its adds-on, stronger encryption and crypto currencies. Findings of the study established that uncoordinated and data dispersal will continue to make it difficult to fight terrorism because data will be more dispersed, localized and anonymous, of which developments in artificial intelligence will allow the filtering and identification of crucial information more rapidly making it easier to monitor the internet as a means for distributing propaganda, radicalising sympathisers and preparing attacks on target.

McKendrick (2019) examined artificial intelligence prediction and counter terrorism. The study revealed that the use of artificial intelligence for predictive purposes in counterterrorism allow higher volumes of data to be analysed, and may perceive patterns in those data that would, for reasons of volume and dimensionality, be beyond the capacity of human interpretation. The study submitted that developments in artificial intelligence have amplified the ability to conduct

surveillance without being constrained by resources as facial recognition technology, may enable the complete automation of surveillance using CCTV in public places.

Byman and Saber (2019) engaged thematic research approach to investigate China's preparedness for global terrorism. Findings of the study showed that Chinese Communist Party (CCP) extensively engaged technological advancements; surveillance cameras equipped with facial recognition, to monitor internment camps, forced labour, Xinjiang residents and daily indoctrination programs to clamp down on separatist movements. Study submitted that such surveillance technology of curbing terrorism at home is actively marketed abroad and has made China an active player in international counterterrorism despite criticisms of China's human rights violations records.

Community Participation and Policing Strategy and Curbing Insurgency

The study of Daniel (2011) employed system theory to investigate the nexus between the Nigerian police and her policing strategies especially in relation to intelligence-information gathering since independence. The thematic study showed that despite modern and community policing trainings, policing strategy still remain combative and reactive rather than proactive even as investment in policing dwindled in the face of continuous breakdown in law and order in major cities. While Romaniuk (2012) thematically assessed the significance of the changing nature of the Al Qaeda threat and the threat of transnational terrorism. Findings of the study revealed that deployments of satellites led technology of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (drones) have extensively aided operations many times by the United States to eliminate terrorists; Iranian security chief, Lieutenant General, Qassim Soleimani; Osama Bin Laden; Najmaddin Jalolov and others.

Henry Jackson Society (2014) investigated insurgency and terrorism in Nigeria. Findings revealed that threat from Boko Haram and Ansaru becomes are complex because terrorists can merge into the civilian populace making identification difficult without better Human Intelligence network from the populace for counter terrorism operations. Study submitted that despite assets of two surveillance drones, the system is still dependent on external imagery intelligence limited by heavy foliage which is the usual terrain of the terrorists. The study of Audu (2016) engaged a qualitative approach to examine community policing by exploring the police/community relationship for crime control in Nigeria. The study adopted focus group

discussions and individual in-depth interviews. Findings of the study revealed that there exist a relationship gap between the police and community in Nigeria caused by the mistrust in the police by the members of public.

Okoli (2019) qualitatively assessed the curbing of rural banditry in northern Nigeria which has degenerate into a complex national emergency with dire territorial implications of same evolvment pattern like Boko Haram. Study submitted that it is only by forceful inland and frontier policing with strategies peculiar to the region's circumstances of diverse borderlines, forestlands and hinterlands that rural banditry can be rested.

Collaborative efforts of Law Enforcement Agencies and Telecoms Operator and Curbing Insurgency

Okwudili (2015) adopted survey design to analyse the impact of the regulatory activities of National Communication Commission (NCC) on the marketing of telecommunication Services in Nigeria. Findings of the study queried the extent to which NCC has achieved their third regulatory objectives; to protect the larger interest of the society knowing well there is no closer collaboration between NCC and the nation's security agencies in the fight against the use of ICT in the perpetration of such crimes like kidnapping, cyber –crime and insurgency.

Obarisiagbon and Aderinto (2018) deployed content analysis to investigate the point of departure between the administration of criminal justice in Nigeria and the prevalence of kidnapping viz a viz its implication. The study engaged qualitative method and manual content analysis to analyse data. Findings from the study revealed the rather depressing role that network providers play, which has impacted negatively on the LEA and the ability of the state to secure conviction in relation to kidnap and violent crime cases. The study of Eme (2018) adopted exploratory research design to investigate the perennial conflicts between and amongst the various security agencies in Nigeria with a view to creating a new path to inculcating tolerance for enhanced synergy towards optimal service delivery and national security. Findings from the study showed escalating incidences of clashes amongst security agencies in Nigeria who abdicated their statutory responsibility of securing life and property to dissipation of professional skills in prosecuting debilitating acrimonious rancor which exposes the society that depends so much on them to the vagaries of security threats.

Theoretical Framework

The Routine Activities Theory

The Routine Activities Theory (RAT) as used by Ojedokun and Ogundipe (2017) was pioneered by Cohen and Felson (1979) in an attempt to understand patterns and upward trends of predatory criminal events in the historical context of changing economy. The theory submits that crime is likely to occur when there is a spatial-temporal convergence of three essential elements of crime, namely a motivated offender, an attractive target, and the absence of capable guardianship. According to exponents of the theory (Maxfield, 1987; Ojedokun & Ogundipe, 2017), motivated offenders are individuals who are capable and willing to commit a crime while suitable targets can be a person or object that are considered by offenders as vulnerable or attractive.

Applied to the purpose of the present study, the vast ungoverned settings of North west region particularly the epicenter of this crisis; Zamfara, characterized by a high proclivity to criminal indulgence, attacks by different armed actors signifies the absence of guardianship which allows offenders to engage in rustling of cattle, razing down of barns and homes, illicit gold mining and acts of sexual violence. Such that women and girls are often abducted and raped or gang raped by armed group members in the presence of family members.

Methodology

The study employed thematic research approach to investigate the roadmap to tackling insurgency, armed banditry and kidnapping in the North West region of Nigeria. The study reviewed related literatures, government reports and extant publications alongside interviews with government officials, security officials at the Federal and State levels, artisanal miners, community leaders and representatives of civil society organisations, former bandits and vigilantes, victims of violence and humanitarian workers as stakeholders in the vexed North West region.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that bandit attacks in the North West have negatively affected farming activities in that part of the country and this has serious negative implication on food security of the country. The study also revealed that poor governance is partly responsible for the emergence of insurgency, armed banditry and kidnapping in the North West region of Nigeria. Lastly, the study showed that deployment of technology, intelligence gathering and the use of community

policy strategy have significantly reduced insurgency activities, armed banditry and kidnapping in the North West region of Nigeria. These Findings are in consonance with the previous studies of Ordu (2015); Audu (2016); Ibrahim and Mukhtar (2017); Shehu et al., (2017); Emanemua & Akinlosotu (2017); Saidu et al., (2018); Gadzama et al., (2018); McKendrick (2019); Byman and Saber (2019); Okoli (2019).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on interviews and empirical literature so far reviewed, it is apparently clear that Nigeria and the international community can no longer pay lip service to the adoption and deployment of a technologically driven surveillance in the North West especially the porous stretch of border neither can anything less than a genuine activation of good governance rescue the North West region from the iron grip of insurgency, armed banditry and kidnapping which has quickly becoming a fertile and preparatory ground for Jihadist elements from Sahel.

This study hereby recommends thus:

- i. The enthronement of good governance and fortified institutional framework covering all the ungoverned space in the North West region will be a major breakthrough and not just raw militarization of the region. The institutional framework should be seen working especially the social justice system.
- ii. Deployment of technology and intelligence resource by law enforcement agencies and related agencies like National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA) will enhance winning the battle against terror in the North West region. The effective deployment of the drones and techno based surveillance with a motivated security agencies cannot but deliver.
- iii. Community participation at the centre of the country policing strategy will be a major game changer as the present reactive policing strategy should be replaced by community oriented policing strategy which should be techno driven has no significant effect on curbing insurgency, kidnapping and banditry in North West region.
- iv. Collaborative efforts of law enforcement agencies, telecoms operators. Information sharing should seen done by establishment of a fusion centre and a secure software application to enhance this as crime and criminalities has also gone digital.

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