



NEXUS BETWEEN HERDSMEN BANDITRY AND FOOD SCARCITY: A CALL FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Conflict and violence remain critical condition for human survival in terms of adequate feeding. In other words, there is a link between conflicts and quantity of food production for a nation. Therefore, this paper examines the nexus between herdsmen banditry and food scarcity in Nigeria with a view to providing good governance for Nigerians. The paper conceives herdsmen banditry as an organized crime perpetrated through incessant attacks on innocent people which may involve killing, maiming, kidnapping, rustling of livestock and destruction of properties. This heinous act is mostly triggered by economic, political and social gains; whereas one of its fallouts is food scarcity in Nigeria. However, it has been argued that banditry is a form of agitation against government impunity, preferential treatment and bad economy, which snowballs unemployment figures to alarming rates. To this end, it is believed that good governance is the only viable antidote to herdsmen banditry that disperses people from farming community. The paper concluded that effective utilization of elements of good governance would abate bandit attacks and other conflicts, thereby paving ways for reactivation of large farming across Nigerian society and ensuring food sufficiency in Nigeria. Among others, it was recommended that government should beef-up security apparatus at the local community for farmers; and provide support for farmers in the area of fertilizer, seedling and grants for large farming scale.

Keywords: *Herdsmen banditry, food scarcity, good governance, government, bandit attacks.*

Introduction

In recent times, in Nigeria, people tend to live in fear of unknown due to incessant attacks of banditry who perpetrate all sorts of vices. For Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016), the pervasive banditry and its associated threats to security has become a source of worrisome to national security issue of

public concern. Stressing that banditry attack is being experienced majorly by the farmers across nook and crane of Nigeria. In support of this, Olaniyan (2018) reports indicate the flourishing of bandit groups whose members were seen displaying automatic weapons, terrorizing farm settlements, villages and the highways with the mission of killing people, kidnapping and pillaging livestock. In fact, the magnitude of attacks as reported by Bashir (2014) and Tauna (2016) showed that between October 2013 and March 2014, 7,000 cattle were rustled from commercial livestock farms and traditional herders in Northern Nigeria. Whereas Abdullahi (2019) reported that about 330 attacks were made by bandits and 1,460 deaths were recorded between January and July, 2019. Simply put, bandits are now monsters that carryout social vices and criminalities to men and women as well as young and old.

In support of the assertion above, Akowe and Kayode (2014) observe that attacks by bandits involved killing, maiming and rape of women and girls before dispossessing them of their cows; while in some instance, they also kidnap girls or women in the process (see Adeniyi, 2015; Yusuf, 2015). In other words, herdsmen banditry has grounded security apparatus to zero level occasioned by their daily heinous activities. Take for example; Global Rights (2020) report revealed that 3,188 persons including 2,707 civilians and 481 security operatives were reportedly killed in 2019 due to bandits' attacks. Assessment conducted between August and October 2019 reported that over 2 million people were displaced in Northern Nigeria while in January 2020, 507 fatalities were reported throughout Nigeria (FEWS NET, 2020). In this sense, every region and all Nigerian citizens are prone to callousness of bandit attacks. Although scholars like Gaye (2018) and Mustapha (2019) have advanced reasons for prevalence of cruelty display by herdsmen banditry in Nigeria. For these authors, factors such as fragility of Nigerian state, weak state institutions, especially the security agencies, availability of grossly ungoverned spaces, porosity of borders with neighbouring countries and arms proliferation, weak leadership, corruption, unemployment and mass poverty account for insecurity in Nigeria. The resultant effects of these factors/variables are noticed in all segments of human life especially food security, where scarcity of food items become an eye-saw in the market.

The above statement is supported by FEWS NET (2020) that there is chronic and seasonal food insecurity in every part of Nigeria, escalated by frequent

high food prices, impact of conflict related to insurgency, armed banditry, pastoralist/farmer crisis, and kidnapping. In other words, herdsmen banditry accounts for about 73% of insecurity crises in Nigeria thereby fuelling food scarcity (see World Bank, 2018). Put differently, food scarcity in Nigeria is currently at alarming rate calling for urgent and immediate intervention with a disturbing rank of 94 among 113 countries without sufficient food behind Ethiopia, Niger and Cameroon (EIU, 2019). Little wonder, Global Hunger Index (GHI) (2019) score Nigeria a low score of 34%, which falls in the serious category indicating that Nigeria has not attained the target of ending all forms of hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030. Hence, the intense bandit attacks have led to increased displacement of persons with negative impacts on many households especially farmers who cannot access their farms.

By implication, herdsmen bandit groups have formed into uncompromising crises making Nigeria's one of the most serious security issues. For Ayoola (2018), herdsmen-farmers conflicts have not only resulted in lost of lives but also displaced hundreds of thousands of farmers across north and south, east and west. The waves of unceasing massacres, cattle rustling, kidnapping, and displacement of residents by armed bandits have been connected with low in farm produce or gross food scarcity. In support of this, Okoli and Ochim (2016) and Mustapha (2019) contend that the increasing attacks of bandit groups have led to the destruction of lives and properties, displacement of people from their communities; and a growing numbers of widows, widowers and orphans who now reside in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps following the continued attacks of armed bandits on both farming and pastoral communities across different states in Nigeria. That is, bandits' attack is not unconnected with scarcity of foods because dispersion of farmers from their farm settlements affects many large scale farmers who would have produced large food items for our teeming population.

The assertion above underscores the negative impact of bandit attacks on food scarcity in Nigeria. However, the nexus between governance and the phenomenon of rising cases of herdsmen banditry, which bring about insecurity in all aspects of live including food scarcity, has not gained attention of scholars and researchers as demanded. That is, there is every need to contextualize herdsmen banditry in terms of lack of good governance in Nigeria. Perhaps Chukwuma (2014) was right to have observed that good government could be the answer which will stem down the rate of insurgent,

banditry, incessant unknown gunmen attacks that pervade all regions of the nation. This may be true, if governance is considered as all aspects of the way a country is governed, its economic policies and regulatory framework (International Monetary Fund, 2016). By implication, governance deals with the totality of governmental actions and activities that are geared or directed towards making and realizing effective economic growth across board- from state to individual economic stability. This perception of governance places emphasis on economic stability of the nation as well as individual citizen and their development.

Moreover, absence of economic viability and individual development lead to crime perpetration as being expressed in widespread killings, armed robbery, kidnapping, assassination and destruction of farm settlements as well as farmers without limits. However, the extent at which good governance can subdue upsurge of incidences of banditry; and by extension guarantee production of sufficient food has not been explored. Therefore, this paper examines the point of intersection between herdsmen banditry and food scarcity in Nigeria by dissecting and analyzing the thrust of good governance.

Working Theory

This paper is predicated on the principle of structural functionalism. Structural functionalism as propounded by Herbert Spencer (1869) may be regarded as rational explication for apparent stability and internal cohesion needed by societies to endure over time. To the structural functionalists, societies are seen as coherent, bounded and fundamentally relational constructs that function like organisms, with their various units (or social institutions) working together in an unconscious, quasi-automatic fashion towards achieving an overall social equilibrium. In this sense, all social and cultural phenomena are therefore seen as functional in the sense of working, and are effectively deemed to have 'lives' of their own. They are primarily analyzed in terms of this function. The individual is significant not in and of himself, but rather in terms of his status, his position in patterns of social relations, and behaviours associated with his status. To this end, the social structure is the network of statuses connected by associated roles.

Being a sociological theory, structural functionalism serves as a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. This theory asserts that human lives in

the society are guided by social structures, which are relatively stable patterns of social behaviours. It is social structures that shape our lives for instance, in families, the community, and through religious organizations. Undoubtedly, each social structure has social functions or consequences for the operation of society as a whole. Take for instance, Education as a social institution is one of the structures of the society directed to provide social functions such as socialization, learning, social placement, etc. For Spencer, social structure, social functions, manifest functions, and latent functions are essential ingredients of the society. Therefore, each social structure of the society has to contribute its roles for proper functioning of the society as a whole because dysfunction in any segment, affects the entire society.

By implication, one of the social structures (e.g. economy), which is supposed to cater for the standard of living of citizens seems to be malfunctioning, thereby affecting the entire Nigerian society. Ideally, one would expect good governance as a key to optimization of social structures whereas the absence of good governance triggers malfunctioning in each sector of the society (e.g. education, economy, labour and productivity, etc). Therefore, bandit attacks are attributable to bad governance that cannot provide viable economy or provide employment opportunities for teeming youths who take to violence in return. Again, bad governance is responsible for bad educational system to the extent that over 10.5 million Nigerians are out of school or dropout (see UNESCO, 2009). The resultant effects of ignorance is fight-for-no-course as demonstrated by herdsmen banditry who involve in incessant kidnapping, killing, rustling of livestock, etc.

Again, based on structural functionalism theory, each social institution/structure has social functions or consequences for the operation of society as a whole. That is, viable economy that guarantees employment opportunities and better standard of living renders positive social functions in the society; whereas the absence of better life, employment opportunity, etc are consequences of one segment of the society that is malfunctioning. To this end, government ought to provide good governance to ensure that all segments of the society function optimally for the sake of the society. In this wise, good governance will ensure provision of essential structures in the society, define the roles to be played by such structures, examine the consequences of non-functional structure to the society, and examine how new structures could emerge for better services.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study that depends on secondary source of information to dissect, analyze, synthesize and justify significant roles of good governance in curbing bandit attacks and promote food production in large scale. Besides, Structural Functionalism Theory as conceived in this study has provided epistemological background upon which logical position could be drawn that good governance is central to minimizing herdsmen banditry and enhancing food security among Nigerian citizenries.

Conceptual Clarifications:

Concept of Herdsmen Banditry

The term 'Banditry' is a derivative of the term 'Bandit' meaning an unlawful armed group terrorizing people and confiscating their properties. It is synonymous with the establishment of gang of groups who use small and light weapons to carry out attacks against people. Perhaps Egwu (2016) was right to have conceived banditry as a set-up criminal activity deliberately designed and carried out for personal gains. However, when banditry is construed from myopic manner, it is regarded as a practice of stealing cattle and animals from herders or raiding of cattle from their ranches (Abdullahi, 2019). For Uche and Iwuamadi (2018), banditry has become criminal escapade like cattle rustling, kidnapping, armed robbery, drug abuse, arson, rape and the brazen and gruesome massacre of people of agrarian communities with sophisticated weapons by suspected herdsmen and reprisal attacks from surviving victims, a development that has been brought to the front burner of national security. In this sense, banditry is a national security threat whereby the leaders and the led could become victims at any time.

The assertion above explains why Shalangwa (2013) regards banditry as 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 perceived as outlaws, desperate and lawless marauders who do not have a definite residence or destination but roam around the forest and mountains to avoid being identified, detected and arrested. Put differently, bandits are gang groups terrorizing and dispossessing local people or travelers of their valuable items or properties such as merchandise, money,

cattle, camel, and sheep, among others. Abullahi (2019) observed that bandits operate within and along rural borders with the assistance of their local collaborators including in some cases, state agents deployed to work for the safety and security of the people. That is, bandits usually have syndicate in form of informants who provides them with information about their target victims before or after attacking the victims.

Contrary to the views above, banditry may involve incidences of armed robbery or allied violent crimes such as kidnapping, cattle rustling, and village or market raids. It is in this sense that Okoli and Okpaleke (2014) described banditry as the use of force, or threat to intimate a person or a group of persons in order to rob, rape or kill. Although every bandit attack is motivated in one way or the other, but herdsmen-farmers conflicts are also considered as likely factor that promulgated unlawful possession of firearms. Perhaps this explains why herdsmen banditry is closely linked to the conflicts between herdsmen and farmers with unceasing massacres, cattle rustling, and displacement of residents (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019). Hence, in the context of this paper, herdsmen banditry is described as the totality of incidences of armed robbery or allied violent crimes involving the use of force or threat so as to intimidate a person or a group of persons in order to rob, rape or kill.

Evidently, herdsmen banditry brings about the existence of constant fear of attacks, which take away human dignity and people's ability to organize, seek and engage in livelihoods (ThisDay, 2014). In fact, banditry has been classified not on their level of destructions but on the basis of underlying intent or motive. According to Abdullahi (2019), banditry is divided into;

- Social Banditry: This type of banditry is motivated by the intent to protest social inequality and to redistribute wealth within a locality.
- Urban or Rural Banditry: When location of occurrence is the underlying index in an attack then we talk of urban or rural banditry.
- Mercenary Banditry: This is perpetuated by auxiliaries or mercenaries working for a principal in a sort of principal-agent relationship.
- Autonomous Banditry: This is self-motivated and personally commissioned.
- Organized Banditry: This is usually done through a network of actors who are syndicates and jointly perpetuate the act for economic or

political intent. That is, there is collection of ransom or release of arrested gang member(s) of bandit groups.

- Roving Banditry: These bandit groups are more or less mobile or itinerant who operate on the move.
- Maritime Banditry: This type of bandit group operates on the water or offshore, which contrary to mainland.

From the foregoing, it must be reiterated that lack of economic viability of people tend to trigger banditry acts in such that standard of living is unbearable and people are compelled to seek solace in anything to guarantee life. Hence, this is the perfect description of what most bandits experience before taking to crime. Amongst the fallouts of herdsmen banditry is food scarcity since many farmers have been dispersed from their farms.

On Defining Food Scarcity

There is no doubt that food security is an essential issue that concerns every human- old and young, man and woman. The term ‘Food Security’ is a broad concept involving adequate production and distribution of food items to those who desire it (Eme, Onyishi, Uche, & Uche, 2014). However, when food availability is not sufficient for those who desire it, then there is food scarcity. Simply put, food scarcity is used to replace food insecurity because it involves inaccessibility and non-availability of food stuff, stability of supplies and the quality of the diet (Honfoga & Van Den Boon, 2013). For Austin (2015), food security implies availability of food and one’s access to it whereas non-availability and inaccessibility of food items for everyone amount to scarcity of food. In other words, there is no food scarcity or insecurity when people are not hungry or in fear of starvation. That is, food scarcity occurs when majority of the population do not have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

The assertion above reveals that food scarcity is not only about having insufficient and inadequate quantities of various food items at affordable prices, it further means that there is need for mass food production, and the need to ensure that majority of the population have sufficient purchasing power to acquire food items that guarantee good feeding and nutrition. As observed by Talibah (2018), that food scarcity affects purchasing power of many people since scarcity of food brings about inflation in food prices

thereby hindering good feeding habit and better diet. In analyzing the main components of food scarcity in Nigeria, Adebayo (2017) revealed that food scarcity situation prevalent in the Nation's households. The components under consideration are availability, stability, accessibility and utilization—that is;

- Food Availability means ensuring sufficient quantity and quality of food supply for households through production or through purchase from market given sufficient purchasing power.
- Stability of Food refers to food supply without any fluctuations or shortages from season to season and from year to year. This requires improvement on storage facilities to reduce to barest minimum food loses.
- Access to Food is dependent on affordability which is assured when households obtain appropriate food for nutritious diet, and the key determinants of food access are economic, physical, political and socio-cultural factors which may likely stand as a barrier for accessing food when it is needed.
- Utilization of Food suggests taking the right food that is adequately and nutritionally balanced especially to children, pregnant and nursing mothers as well as the elderly who need adequate diet for their well-being. This will go a long way in reducing the risk of nutritional and deficiency diseases (see Adebayo, 2017).

In one hand, food scarcity is a serious plight that could lead to hunger and starvation with resultant effects such as sickness and diseases, stealing, robbery, banditry and kidnapping to mention but a few. On the other hand, USAID (2011) identified positive effects of non-scarcity of food in the steady development in secured human dignity; real opportunities to explore available resources; ensure justice; ensure security at the highest level; unlock a vast resource of human innovation; stronger and a healthier nation; uplift economy and at the same time improve household income; guarantee better future for children where their brains are developed for better educational activities; experience less hunger and focus on other important things that will bring development in the area of science and technology; and it ensures a better place for all.

Evidently, ensuring non-scarcity of food is essential to peaceful coexistence of Nigerians irrespective of tribe, religion and region. In addition, the study

conducted by Fawole (2015) revealed importance of food production to Nigerian society to include access to nutritious food through comprehensive approaches to food and nutrition security, preventing excessive food price vitality, ensuring adequate child care and feeding practices with sufficient access as well as availability of food for pregnant women. The study further discovered that destruction of lives and property in these few years has negatively impacted potential farmers in Nigeria. Conversely, Olaoye (2017) argued that many young farmers are not willing to stay in the rural area owing to lack of social amenities. Perhaps Oni (2018) was right to have suggested that provision of basic amenities such as roads, potable water, electricity, etc will encourage rural dwellers and prevent or minimize rural-urban migration as it ensures adequate labour for agricultural activities, thereby increasing food productivity that will not only subdue food scarcity but guarantee employment opportunities to the growing population. To this end, dealing with food scarcity requires provision of social amenities for rural dwellers to attract and keep them for intended purpose. As observed by Oni (2018), good governance is needed to bring an end to the ongoing crises of banditry that has grounded food production to almost zero level. That is, good governance will ensure peaceful coexistence of Nigerians- devoid of killing, kidnapping, maiming and burning of properties.

Good Governance

Before discussing the term “Good Governance” it is important to conceptualize governance as an exercise of power through a country’s economic, social and political institutions in which institutions represent the rules and routines, and informal norms that together shape the incentives of public policy makers, overseers and providers of public services. For Jimoh and Akuba (2019), the dimension of governance includes the process by which governments are selected, held accountable, monitored and replaced, the capacity of governments to manage resources effectively and to formulate, implement, and enforce sound policies and regulations, and respect for institutions that govern economic and social interactions. In other words, governance is what government displayed through the use of political authority and exercise of control in a society in relation to the management of its resources for social and economic development (Ayuba, 2015). In this sense, governance is not unconnected with the role of public authorities in

establishing the environment in which economic resources and funding are efficiently managed in determining the common good.

Again, governance is a concept that is germane and relevant to public institutions in every nation of the world. Etymologically sense, the word “governance” is believed to have originated from the ancient Greek (see Hull, 2005), but semantically, it is being used as steering, guiding, or manoeuvring a ship or a land-based vehicle. For Austin (2016), the concept of governance in relation with government or governs has for long been around in political and academic discourse, depicting the tasks of carrying out governmental activities or assignments. Hence, in government activities, governance is linked to a well-planned economic policy as a precondition for the survival, stability and development of a nation. Moreover, governance could be good or bad depending on how it is assessed. Conversely, the concept of Good Governance expresses an appendage “Good” to the word “Governance”, and it is seen as the process and institution by which authority in a country is exercised (World Bank, 2014). Perhaps Ogundiya (2016) was right to have construed good governance as ethical grounding of governance, which is usually evaluated in terms of specific norms and objectives of such government. That is, good governance could be instrumental to government overall better performance in various segments of the society.

The assertion above explains why scholars like Fabiyi (2014) and Garba (2016) averred for good governance, having conceived good governance as a worthy goal and a means through which economic growth and overall development is achieved. For these authors, in a bad governed country, corrupt bureaucrat and politicians intentionally hindered development efforts by stealing or misleading into unproductive activities. In addition, Rogers (2015) maintained that lack of good governance make governments not to be accountable to their citizens and with inefficient bureaucracies as well as weak institutions characterized with inaptitude to formulate and implement pro-growth and anti-poor policies. Simply put, indices and elements of good governance are essential for measuring the development progress or otherwise of any nation as major features of good governance are required for all round development.

Furthermore, the tenets of good governance promote political conditionalities whereby liberal models of democracy can be effectively practiced (see Booths, 2011). That is, the agenda of good governance is

relevant and applicable for development policy, even outside the Western world. Unarguably, this explains why governments perform in the Western countries than Africa, since good governance ensures realistically long issues or programmes of sequencing and historical developments. Put differently, good governance paves ways for formulation and implementation of realistic policies in every institution of the government thereby ensuring that each section contributes logically to set objectives of the government. Little wonder, Samson (2018) contend that good governance is applicable to all sections of society, namely government, legislature, judiciary, media, private sector, corporate sector, trade unions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). By implication, various sections of society ought to conduct their affairs with the principles of good governance, most especially the government of the day. At this juncture, it must be reiterated that Nigerian government has to use the tenets of good governance to achieve larger good of the largest number of people in Nigerian society.

Herdsmen banditry and food scarcity: Contextual Issues in Nigeria

The current frequency of herdsmen bandit attacks alongside its negative impacts on virtually everyone has become worrisome to all and sundry. For Okoli (2016), herdsmen banditry has increased astronomically in terms of scale and intensity with the use of sophisticated weapons in perpetrating armed robbery, assassination, cattle rustling and kidnapping. In other words, herdsmen bandit groups have metamorphosed to armed robbers who raid villages, households, shops and markets for the purpose of looting. Besides, the bandits involve in highway robbery and kidnapping, which is a common experience in Nigerian society of today. In fact, there is a continual interception of motorists with travelers on the various highways along Abuja-Kaduna, Kaduna-Zaria, Ibadan-Lagos, Ondo-Okene, and Onisha-Ore axes (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019).

Kidnapping is a crime committed for the purpose of ransom- the rich and the poor, male and female, as well as old and young are now victims of this crime. For Okoli and Okpaleke (2014), apart from mass kidnapping of students (across all tiers of education) kidnapping in Kaduna, Katsina and Zamfara States involves highway-armed abduction whereby travelers are ambushed and abducted by bandits and then taken to a hideout in the forest where their relatives or associates are contacted for ransom payment.

However, Yaro and Tobias (2019) observed that sometimes, bandit attacks as reprisals attack on a rivalry village or group. Also, Gadzama, Saddiq, Oduehe and Dariya (2018) maintained that a reasonable number of bandits engage in cattle rustling. For these authors, it is a form of organized cattle theft driven by allied accumulative or profiteering inclinations. Simply put, bandits are criminal gangs engaging in organized rural banditry to profit from livestock theft (Asmau & Abdulrasheed, 2020). To this end, herdsmen bandit attacks have reached alarming rates with unbearable destructions across nook and cranny of Nigerian society.

Evidently, herdsmen banditry is a new monster in Nigeria now as reports confirmed series of killings, maiming, lootings in towns and villages. According to the Nigeria Watch Project's (2016) report on fatality trends, Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa and Plateau account for the majority of incidents of violent deaths. In his reports, Suleiman (2017) confirmed 55 separate Fulani attacks in 14 different States resulting in over one thousand deaths. In fact, reported cases of herdsmen attacks across Nigeria between 2016 and 2020 reveal concentration of the casualties and victims on Katsina, Zamfara, Kaduna, Plateau, and Niger States within the periods (see tab 1 below).

Table 1: Recent Incidences of Bandit Attacks in Nigeria

S/N	Newspaper	Reporter(s)	Dates of Publication	Nature & Place of Attack	Causalities
1.	The Punch	Gbenro Adeoye	March 31, 2018	Bandits attacked Bawan Daji Village of Anka LGA of Zamfara State	Over 30 killed
2.	The Nation	The Nation	March 1, 2019	21 people were killed in Kawaye village in Anka LGA of Zamfara State	21 killed and 40 abducted
3.	The Punch	The Punch	June 9, 2019	25 killed in Klahu, Tsage and Geeri villages in Rabah LGA of Sokoto State	25 killed
4.	The Punch	Olaide Oyelude	July 4, 2019	11 killed in Kankara and Danmusa LGAs of Katsina State	11 killed
5.	The Nation	The Nation	August 19, 2019	4 killed in Tsayu village of Jibiya LGA of Katsina State	4 villagers killed

6.	The Punch	Maiharaji Altine	January 17, 2020	31 killed at Babban Rafi village in Gummi LGA and Makosa village in Zurmi LGA of Zamfara State	31 killed
7.	Nigerian Tribune	Muhammed Sabiu	March 21, 2020	50 killed in villages in Igabi and Giwa LGA of Kaduna State	50 killed
8.	The Punch	Olaide Oyelude	April 20, 2020	47 killed in Kurechin village Kastina State	47 killed
9.	The Nation	AbdulGafar Alabelewa	April 24, 2020	7 killed and 2 kidnapped in Chikun LGA of Kaduna State	7 killed
10.	Nigerian Tribune	Muhammed Sabiu	May 6, 2020	5 killed including DPO and 1 kidnapped in Kastina State	5 killed
11.	The Punch	Maiharaji Altine	May 20, 2020	12 killed in Tsafe LGA of Zamfara	12 killed
12.	The Punch	Maiharaji Altine	June 5, 2020	21 killed in Maru & Talata-Mafara LGAs of Zamfara State	21 killed
13.	The Nation	Justina Asishana	June 25, 2020	4 killed in Shiroro LGA of Niger State	4 killed
14.	The Nation	Justina Asishana	July 21, 2021	16 kidnapped in Rafi LGA of Niger State	16 kidnapped
15.	The Nation	abdulGafar Alabelewe	July 26, 2020	10 killed in Kaura LGA of Kaduna State	10 killed
16.	The Punch	Olaide Oyelude	August 9, 2020	8 killed in Batsari LGA of Kastina State	8 killed
17.	Vanguard	Vanguard	September 4, 2020	22 killed including 19 vigilantes in Dukku and Kagara towns, Niger State	22 killed
18.	Vanguard	Ibrahim Hassan	September 13, 2020	16 family members abducted at Udawa farming community of Kaduna State	16 abducted
19.	Vanguard	Ibrahim Hassan	September 18, 2020	DPO and 1 inspector killed while 2 women abducted in Tangaza LGA of Sokoto	2 killed and 2 also abducted
20.	Vanguard	Wole Mosadomi & Shehu Danjuma	October 12, 2020	14 killed including community Head and	16 killed and 3 abducted

21.	Blueprint	Blueprint	November 2020	7,	his son in southern Kaduna district, Kaduna State & 2 killed and 3 abducted in Rafi LGA, Niger State	16 abducted on highway
22.	Vanguard	Ibrahim Hassan	November 2020	17,	16 people were abducted along Akure-Owo expressway, Ondo State	8 students abducted
23.	Vanguard	Wole Mosadomi	November 2020	20,	8 students abducted on Kaduna-Abuja road	14 abducted and 1 death
24.	Vanguard	Ifeanyi Nwannah	November 2020	23,	14 abducted and 1 mobile policeman killed in Mariya LGA of Niger State	18 kidnapped
25.	Vanguard	Bashir Bello	December 2020	1,	1 Imam and 17 worshippers abducted from a mosque in Maru LGA, Zamfara State	30 abducted and 7 killed
26.	Vanguard	Vanguard	December 2020	5,	7 killed and 30 abducted in Sabuwa LGA, Kastina State	1 person killed
27.	Daily Post	Daily Post	December 2020	10,	1 person was killed during attack on kasuwaan magaani in kajuru LGA of kaduna State	3 abducted
28.	The Nation	Uja Emmanuel	December 2020	12,	3 people were abducted in Pmahbe Layout in Abuja	4 killed and 7 injured
29.	Vanguard	Vanguard	December 2020	12,	4 people were killed and 7 others injured in Makurdi, Benue State	333 students abducted
30.	The Nation	Justina Asishana	December 2020	13,	About 333 students were missing after attack on GSSS in Kankara LGA of Katsina State	1 person killed and 20 abducted

Source: Rosenje & Adeniyi's Compilation from Nigeria's Daily Newspapers (2020)

From the table above, the herdsmen banditry has covered all Nigerian regions- with records of losses by different social classes. In fact, the frequency, intensity and sophisticated weapons employed in the attacks were in a scale never witnessed before. For Blench (2016), the attendant number of casualties and population displacement across farming communities are worrisome. In other words, banditry involves acts of robbery and violence on the people, especially rural dwellers who mainly engaged in farming, cattle rearing and other food production activities; it is bound to have negative impacts on food scarcity.

Having said that, one of the most challenging issues in Nigeria today is how to provide sufficient food to over two hundred million citizens in Nigeria. In support of this, World Data Lab (2020) revealed that Nigeria has an estimated population 205,323,520 people and has 102,407,327 people living below poverty line (50% of the total population). By implication, about 50% cannot feed adequately due to economic standpoint of the nation whereby food items are being stricken with upper inflation. Food scarcity in Nigeria is currently at alarming rate demanding for urgent and immediate intervention of the relevant stakeholders. In fact, the reports of Global Food Security Index (GFSI) had continued to rank and score Nigeria low since 2012 till date (see table 2 below).

Table 2: Nigeria's Ranks and Scores in Global Food Security Index 2012 – 2019

Year	Ranks	Scores %
2012	80	34.8
2013	86	33
2014	87	36.5
2015	91	37.1
2016	90	39.4
2017	92	38.4
2018	96	38
2019	94	48.4

Source: Idris, Ayinde, & Otekunrin (2020)

The table above shows that food insecurity in Nigeria is currently at alarming rate calling for urgent and immediate intervention. According to the table, Nigeria's ranking in Global Food Security Index (GFSI) has continued to

increase since 2013 (ranked 86 among 107 countries with 33/100 score) and reached a disturbing rank of 94 (with 48.4/100 score) among 113 countries behind Ethiopia, Niger and Cameroon in 2019 GFSI overall ranking table (the closer to 100 score the better) (Idris, Ayinde & Otekunrin, 2020).

The above shows that Nigeria is having shortfall in food production. The sorry state of food scarcity in Nigeria is occasioned by chronic and hidden hunger, extreme poverty, corruption, communal conflicts, banditry and insurgency as well as climate change. This is supported by the Global Hunger Index (GHI) (2019) reports where Nigeria has a GHI score of 27.9%, which falls in the serious category of nations with food problem. By implication, these data confirmed that Nigeria is not yet on the track in attaining the SDG2 target of ending all forms of hunger, achieve food sufficiency and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030. The reports further lend credence to increased rates of undernourished from 9.3% in 2000 to 13.4% in 2019 while a slight decrease was reported in low-purchasing power from 39.7% to 37% in 2019 (GHI, 2019; Centre for Africa and Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2019).

The statement above explains why chronic and seasonal food scarcity persist in every part of Nigeria, escalated by frequent high food prices, impact of conflict related to bandits attacks and insurgency, communal pastoralist-farmer crises, kidnapping, cattle rustling and climate change (FEWS NET, 2020). There is no doubt that most of the farm produces are done in the northern part of Nigeria, and this same region is bedeviled with banditry and terrorism at about 73% in recent times (see World Bank, 2018). According to the International Office of Migration assessment in October 2018, over 1.8 million persons were displaced across north central owing to the activities of banditry whereas Borno state in the northeast remains the epicenter of Boko Haram hosting over 1.4 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (FEWS NET, 2019). Also, it was reported that over 2 million people were displaced between August and October 2019 in the northwest states while in January 2020, 507 fatalities throughout Nigeria were recorded due to bandit attacks. Agriculture, a major source of livelihood for people in these areas, and other income generating activities were disrupted leading to reduced household income and low food production (USAID, 2017).

The trajectory of the phenomenon of herdsmen banditry in Nigeria can be explained from the overall decline in the capacity of the nation to regulate, extract and distribute farm produce to meet the yearnings of the people.

Perhaps Best (2016) was right to have observed that in many African countries, conflicts are state and government generated, as a result of the insensitivity and incompetence of the regimes on the continent. The compromising position of Nigerian government stands in opposition to Ake's perception of the state as an objective force that mediates in conflicts (Ake, 2014). Regrettably, Nnoli (2013) averred that the intensity, level of violence and duration of conflicts are driven by involvement of the government. This is an expression of impunity, which is a characteristic of a fragile government. The Human Rights Watch (2015) maintains that impunity for cycles of uncontrolled and unpunished violence by herdsmen bandit has encouraged its intensity and continuation. To this end, the persistence of bandit attacks in every nook and cranny of Nigeria whereby food scarcity is the order of the day raises questions on the nature and output of governance.

Curbing Herdsmen Banditry for Food Security: A Course for Good Governance

At this juncture, it must be reiterated that herdsmen banditry and food scarcity can be construed as resultant effects of lack of good governance. That is, there is a link between good governance and activities of banditry in Nigerian society. This viewpoint has been explored further in this paper by using relevant theory and empirical evidences thereby underscoring the nexus between governance and banditry. As identified earlier, herdsmen banditry is linked with economy, which is the most essential sector of the society. However, weak economy is driven by bad governance. The centrality of functionalism theory is that each sector of Nigerian society, economy inclusive should drive other sectors of the society but weak economy triggers social vices especially banditry as a means of survival by the people. Thus weak economy is connected with bad governance thereby paving ways for kidnapping, banditry and armed robbery.

For Okoli and Uhemble (2015), when government fails to demonstrate regulatory, extractive and distributive capacities to provide for the security and well-being of its citizens, citizens may be forced to defend themselves having noticed weak legal institution of the government. Little wonder, Chris (2016) maintains that lack of political will and capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of the citizens are reflections of bad

governance. This as observe in Nigeria, high incidences of violence and conflict are manifestation of bad governance. This assertion implies that food scarcity can become a thing of the past provided herdsmen banditry is subdued through good governance. Olawale (2013) argued that governance is a critical factor in determining the capacity of a nation in controlling security challenges through a complex interaction of economic, political and social factors. In his dictum, Austin (2015) averred that in all societies, it is the governance that frames, focuses and mediates social antagonism; when governance cannot guarantee peaceful environment then the citizens become vulnerable internally and externally to other influences. Patrick (2016) properly linked bad governance with criminality in his assessment of the notion of ‘spillovers’, which asserts a connection between weak states and transnational threats like terrorism, banditry, weapons proliferation and organized crime. Hence, bad governance is the root cause of Boko Haram terrorism, IPOB violence and herdsmen bandit attacks, which are the viable means of fighting for presumed rights or fighting government of the day. Evidently, the importance of good governance to peaceful coexistence of Nigerians cannot be over-emphasized. In support of this, the World Bank (2018) identified four dimensions of good governance as, namely; public sector management, accountability, legal framework for development, and information and transparency. Put differently, good governance is central to creating and sustaining an environment which fosters strong and equitable development and it is an essential complement to sound economic policies. The assertion above shows that good governance is the missing link between herdsmen banditry and food scarcity; because unfeasible economic policy seems not to foster individual development. Besides, World Bank (2015) enumerated three aspects of good governance as:

- The form of polity and the way authority is exercised in society (parliamentary or presidential, military or civilian and authoritarian or democratic);
- The process by which authority is exercised on the country’s economic, political and social spheres and extent to which the citizens are involved and given responsibility; and
- The capacity of government to conceive, formulate and execute policies and in general, to discharge governmental functions as effectively, adequately and efficiently as possible.

To this end, good governance is a sine qua none to unity and tranquility of Nigerians in the North, West and East to participate effectively and efficiently in government programmes targeted at ameliorating crimes. Perhaps Sharma, Sadana and Kaur (2013) were right to have captured the statement above under the elements of good governance as follows;

- a. Participation: That is, participation as key to good governance. Citizens are expected to participate in the organs of government-executive, legislature, judiciary, and regularly exercise their rights to franchise. Participation could be either direct or through the representatives.
- b. Accountability: The test of a vibrant democracy is the degree of success in ensuring accountability of those who rule, to those from whom they derive their authority.
- c. Transparency: A major premise of good governance is the citizen's access to information, and a good government must ensure free flow of information to citizens. In a parliamentary democracy, transparency in government becomes a necessity and this becomes possible by the basic doctrine of separation of power, and checks and balances among executive, legislature, and judiciary branches. Transparency requires that the decisions are taken and their enforcement is done a manner that is in conformity with the rules and regulations.
- d. Rule of Law: This is a framework that is enforced in an impartial manner for protecting human rights, securing social justice and checking abuse of power; it is a prerequisite for good governance.
- e. Consensus Oriented: Good governance aims at reaching broad consensus after mediating different interests in the society for the best interest of the community. It aims at sustainable human development and also to achieve the goals of such development.
- f. Effectiveness and Efficiency: Good governance also rests upon the fact that the process and institutions should produce results to meet the needs of the society. It also entails proper utilization of resources at their disposal as well as in the government.
- g. Responsiveness: Good governance would be possible only when the institutions and processes are responsive and serve all stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe.

- h. Inclusiveness and Equity: good governance advocates that people should not be excluded from the mainstream of the society and the marginalized are able to avail opportunities.

In this sense, the demonstration of those elements highlighted above in the context of governance in Nigeria will go a long way in addressing herdsmen banditry so as to abate food scarcity. This is based on the feelings that good governance itself is a dynamic administration construct that embraces fast changing political, social and economic arrangements to the favour of citizenry. In fact, the fact that herdsmen-farmers' conflicts have developed and escalated over the past decades and today also metamorphosis to herdsmen banditry does not mean that the narrative cannot be changed. Simply put, bandit attacks, organized criminality, mass kidnapping and cattle rustling in most parts of Nigeria can be subdued with efficacy of good governance, thereby reactivating farming and paving ways for genuine pastoralists to resume business to the fullest.

Conclusion

The current situation of bandit attacks in Nigeria is unbearable, especially its resultant effects ranging from kidnapping, killing, to ransom demands and destruction of farms thereby leading to food scarcity. Suffice to say herdsmen banditry is the greatest threat to Nigerians and Nigeria's peace and food security. It is therefore expected of government to curtail bandit attacks by examining its root cause, discontinue access to weapons and firearms, as well as stamp out impunity in the system. Moreover, farmers should be encouraged in all ramifications (e.g. provision of security in the farming communities, support with modern seedling and fertilizer) so as to increase food production for our teeming population.

Recommendations

From the foregoing, as a matter of exigency, all hands must be on deck to curb herdsmen banditry so as to mitigate food scarcity. Among others, the following recommendations are made:-

- a. There is every need for equity and inclusive government. That is, the principles of good governance should be adopted and practiced in totality to ensure no tribe or region feel marginalized because continuous attacks is an indication that some people are not satisfied with the government.

- b. Again, government should fortify security apparatus to provide adequate safety of lives and property. The killing, kidnapping and rustling of livestock with success stories everyday implies that our security architecture is weak; and government cannot provide security anymore.
- c. Similarly, government has to put an end to impunity. The feeling that some people or a particular tribe can commit crime and get away is a wrong signal. In fact, government should order investigation of all recent major incidents of kidnapping, conflicts or attacks and expedite the trials of individuals or groups found to have aided or sponsored.
- d. Efforts should be made to initiate dialogue between communal fighters or pastoralist and farmers in order to make peace for farming community and boost farm produce. This is important to scale-down food scarcity as well as hike in food prices. All communal leaders – religious, regional and ethnic – should denounce violence unequivocally and step up support for local dialogue.
- e. Finally, government should do everything possible to salvage the state of Nigerian economy as a prerequisite to minimize poverty rate and fight social vices such as ritual killing, kidnapping, cyber crime etc.

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