Volume 22 Issue 33
Originally issued as F5

Global Journal of human-social science: F
Political Science
Volume 22 Issue 5 Version 1.0 Year 2022
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

# An Overview of Armed Banditry in Northern Nigeria: A Case Study of Zamfara State

By Babajo Hannatu
*University of Leeds*

*Abstract-* The paper examines armed banditry in Zamfara state. It also makes critical appraisal of the factors that led to the collapse of the peace deal entered in to between Zamfara state government and armed bandits. It also provides a historical background to the crises and incidences of armed banditry in zamfara state since 2011. The paper applies research methodology using secondary sources of data to enable the researcher capture facts from existing literatures. The researcher employs the use of Queer Ladder economic theory upon which the research is based on. The queer Ladder theory postulated by an American sociologist, Daniel Bell (1965), who coined that the functional significance of organized crime is as a desperate tactic for socio-economic empowerment and social climbing. The paper points out causes of armed banditry in Zamfara State to be Poverty, Illiteracy, and Unemployment, High quest of political power by the elites and under development of rural areas. The paper concludes that armed banditry in Zamfara State was as a result of the quest for economic satisfaction and social empowerment looking at the range of causes of this crimes as postulated by Bell's Queer Ladder theory.The paper also posits that banditry constitutes a serious threat to Nigeria's public safety and, by extension, national security.

*GJHSS-F Classification: DDC Code: 150.1988 LCC Code: BF204.6*




*Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:*

© 2022. Babajo Hannatu. This research/review article is distributed under the terms of the Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). You must give appropriate credit to authors and reference this article if parts of the article are reproduced in any manner. Applicable licensing terms are at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/.

# An Overview of Armed Banditry in Northern Nigeria: A Case Study of Zamfara State

Babajo Hannatu

*Abstract-* The paper examines armed banditry in Zamfara state. It also makes critical appraisal of the factors that led to the collapse of the peace deal entered in to between Zamfara state government and armed bandits. It also provides a historical background to the crises and incidences of armed banditry in zamfara state since 2011. The paper applies research methodology using secondary sources of data to enable the researcher capture facts from existing literatures. The researcher employs the use of Queer Ladder economic theory upon which the research is based on. The queer Ladder theory postulated by an American sociologist, Daniel Bell (1965), who coined that the functional significance of organized crime is as a desperate tactic for socio-economic empowerment and social climbing. The paper points out causes of armed banditry in Zamfara State to be Poverty, Illiteracy, and Unemployment, High quest of political power by the elites and under development of rural areas. The paper concludes that armed banditry in Zamfara State was as a result of the quest for economic satisfaction and social empowerment looking at the range of causes of this crimes as postulated by Bell's Queer Ladder theory.The paper also posits that banditry constitutes a serious threat to Nigeria's public safety and, by extension, national security.

The paper recommends, among other things, that Government need to extend the provision of social amenities to key rural communities so that people in the rural communities can feel a sense of belonging. Government at all levels should come up with credible and implementable people-oriented policies and programmes to address the basic livelihood problems of poverty, unemployment and the likes. Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) approach to policing which means police and civilian task force should work hand in hand as a means of addressing the rising prevalence of banditry in Zamfara State.

## I. Introduction

One of the most heart-warming issue that characterizes human living in Zamfara state since after the conduct of the 2011 general elections is the unending conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and Hausa rural settlers especially those residing along Dansadau, Zurmi, Shinkafi, Anka, Maradun and Tsafe forest. This conflict which up till now has not been clearly defined

Either by the government or people of the state started like a mere conflict of interest but later turned to bloody crises which led to the death of over 2000 lives. As argued by Kiruwa (2017) over five thousand lives have been lost to the crises since it started in early 2011 and despite interventions of the government and its agencies has not achieved any attempt to end the conflict.

The tragedy which caused Zamfara state bad name among comity of other states in Nigeria, is considered as one of the most critical challenge that threaten the peace of the state. While hundreds of innocent people are living Zamfara State due to the fear of these armed bandits, hundreds of them continue to take advantage of the situation to rustle more cattle and other ruminant animals. From 2011 to date not fewer than 15,000 cattle were rustled by these suspected armed bandits living away the owners to survive in a state of uncertainty Daniya (2017 in Anka, 2017). In terms of destruction of lives and properties, not fewer than 36 communities along Dansadau, Zurmi, Shinkafi, Tsafe, Bakura and Maradun towns were burnt to the ground with their residents forcefully asked to migrate to alternative safer places Tukur (2017 in Anka 2017).

Despites effort by both the Federal and State Governments to curtail this ugly situation through the use of cohesive measures, the killings and brutality continue to take new dimension as the bandits continue to come with some new strategies of perpetrating their heinous acts. It was difficult for the security agencies to fight along the forest as the bandits understand the terrain more than the security agencies. Former Zamfara State Commissioner of Police Akila Usman Gwary once told NTA News that, security agencies in Zamfara state especially police and army are finding it difficult to fight the armed bandits along Dansadau-Birnin Gwari forest because, there is no access road in trying to reach out to these villages whenever there is report of attack and communication by even the security agencies operating along the forest was virtually impossible NTA (2014).

To alternatively manage the situation, the idea of peace deal and amnesty was initiated between the State government and the leadership of these armed bandits. The peace deal was initiated to enable the armed bandits surrender their weapons and embrace peace. Tangaza (2017) reported that, we have reviewed the impacts of the cohesive measures especially the use of the military and mobile police men and come to the conclusion that, the operation has not yielded the much needed result in spite of huge sum of money spent by the government and we opted for negotiation with the bandits as the best option to ensuring sustainable peace The peace deal has however being described as failure especially with the resurgence of the fresh killings

*Author: School of Geography – Garstang Building, University of Leeds, United Kingdom. e-mail: hannatubabajohh@gmail.com*



© 2022 Global Journals

in some communities along Shinkafi, Tsafe, Dansadau and Maradun with multiple number of death and loss of properties. The new violence is described as the most tragic in the history of the state with brutal murders and sexual intimidation among women and children. In trying to give an account of their tragedy, the victims considered the nature of the operation by the armed bandits as the most inhuman maltreatment against humanity. As captured by Shehu (2017), they are sexually harassing our women. Sometimes they would ask a resident to take his daughter or wife to their camp to rape. No one dares to stop them.

This ugly development emerged at a time when people believed that, the peace deal entered in to between the state government and the bandits would serve as panacea to the crises. But why has the peace deal failed?

This is attributed to many factors among which include,

i). Absence of the political will from the site of the government to implement the agreement it has entered with the bandits.
ii). Non-implementation of rehabilitation and reconstruction measures to bring succour to the victims of these conflicts.
iii). The re-arrest of some members of the bandits by Department of the State Security Services (SSS) after they have signed the peace deal with the state as argued by Shehu (2017), the peace pact was jeopardized after a close associate of Buharin Daji called Dogon Bangaje was intercepted arrested and detained by the DSS.

## II. Theoretical Framework

The study adopted Queer Ladder Theory (QLT). This theory was influenced by an American sociologist, Daniel Bell (1965), who coined the idea of 'queer ladder' in an attempt to explain the functional significance of organized crime as a desperate tactic for socioeconomic empowerment and social climbing. This theoretical perspective has since fertilized into a popular theoretical framework widely used in contemporary crime studies. The basic assumptions of QLT are as follows:

i). Organized crime is an instrumental behavior; it is a means to an end.
ii). It is an instrument of social climbing and/or socio-economic advancement.
iii). It is a means to accumulate wealth and build power. (Mallory, 2007).

Often ascribed to QLT is the notion that organized crime thrives in contexts where the government's capacity to dictate, sanction and deter crime is poor; where public corruption is endemic; and where legitimate livelihood opportunities are slim (Nwoye, 2000; Lyman, 2007; Okoli and Orinya, 2013). Under these circumstances, the incentive to indulge in life of crime is high, while deterrence from criminal living is low. Put differently, the benefits of committing a crime surpass the costs and/or risks. This creates pretext for criminal impunity and franchise (Okoli and Orinya, 2013; Okoli and Okpaleke, 2014).

Applied to the purpose of this work, QLT enables us to come to terms with the prevalence of organized crime in Zamfara State. The theory will be used to look at the historical background of cattle rustling and armed banditry in Zamfara State.

## III. Historical Over-View of Armed Banditry in Zamfara State Since 2011

The history of armed banditry in Zamfara started since around 2009 but it became out of control in 2011 especially after the general elections. The causes of these unending conflicts are many even though people disagreed on causes to a varying extent. While many links the scenario to long term human conflicts between Fulani herders and farmers due to struggle of ownership of farm land and grazing areas, others see it as direct effect of reaction against socio-political and economic marginalization of the Fulani by their Hausa counterparts. As Kiruwa (2017) stated that, people tried to misconceive the cause of these conflicts in Zamfara and to say the facts, not all the attacks are carried out by the Fulani herders but because of the impression people have about our people, and every single action perpetrated in the rural communities is attributed to Fulani herdsmen.

These acts of cattle rustling, and armed banditry has caused a lot of hardship and state of fear among the residents of the states. The miscreants who take advantage of the terrain of some of these areas rustled hundreds of thousands of cattle and other valuables as well as killed scores of people. Bello (2017) mentioned that, communities like Kwokeye, Bingi, Kizara, Mashema, Maji, Fanda, Haki, Matankari, Yar Katsina and many communities in Maru, Anka, Gusau, Tsafe, Birnin Magaji and Zurmi Local Governments were grossly affected. Apart from cattle rustling sometimes women faced constant intimidation and harassment including cases of rape and assault while children are forced to embark on unprepared migration due to the fear of the unknown. Shehu (2017) disclosed that, they are sexually harassing our women. Some time they would ask a resident to take his daughter or wife to their camp to rape and no one dares to stop them. From 2011 to date no accurate statistics could be provided as to the number of people killed through this act of armed banditry. Tukur (2017), opined that, people are killed in communities that are not even known to the security agencies and because of the nature of our community settlements, not all cases are



© 2022 Global Journals

reported especially those that involved Fulani herders. Bello (2017) tries to highlight some flash points that are termed as victims of this banditry but could only cover a few. Below are updated incidences.

*a) Cattle Rustling Incidents and Bandits Attack in Zamfara State (2011-2018)*

| Date | Incidences |
|---|---|
| Oct. 3, 2011 | Bandits raid Lingyado village in Maru LGA of Zamfara State, killing 23 people. |
| Dec. 2011 | Bandits attack Jangebe village of Gusau LGA killing 4 policemen and 2 children. |
| Jan. 26, 2012 | Gunmen killed and set fire to 15 traders in Birnin Magaji in Shamushalle. |
| May 12, 2012 | 8 persons, 4 policemen killed in a shot out with suspected armed robbers and 5 other police men missing at Dansadau, Maru LGA. |
| June 11, 2012 | Scores of motorcycle-riding bandits shot dead 26 residents of Dangulbi village, Garu, sabuwar kasuwa and biya in Dansadau District in Maru LGA of Zamfara State in what was said to be a reprisal attack. |
| October 30, 2012 | Gunmen killed 20 people including the village head in Kabaro in Dansadau district in Maru LGA. |
| December 14,2012 | Gunmen on motorcycles shot 10 vigilantes patrolling in a market at Rukudawa in Zurmi LGA |
| January 05, 2013 | Thirty gunmen on motorcycles gunned down seven people in raids on Makera and Usi villages in Birnin-Magaji District of Zamfara State in what was said to be a reprisal attack. |
| June 18, 2013 | Gunmen attacked and killed 48 people in Kizara village in Tsafe LGA. |
| July- September, 2013 | Gunmen killed 160 people and abducted 10 married women according to Zamfara State Governor |
| September 30, 2013 | 3 people killed by cattle rustlers in Buzuzu village near Bukkuyum LGA. |
| April 6, 2014 | Gunmen killed over 200 people in Yar Galadima village at a meeting by traditional rulers and vigilantes |
| September 2014 | Bandits killed 33 people, rape women and rustle cows at Akuzo, Zarfarawa-Girke, Kofa, Kundubau, Wonaka, Faru- Girke, Fegin Mahe, Kukar Gandu, Kanawa, Lafiya and Gora villages respectively |
| July 2015 | Gunmen on motorcycles killed over 30 people, burnt houses and rustled cows and sheep at Kokeya and Chigama villages of Birnin Magaji LGA |
| February 6, 2016 | Gunmen killed 50 villagers, rustled cows and burnt houses in a night attack in Kwanar Duste village in Maru LGA |
| May 6, 2016 | Armed bandits killed people at Madada and Ruwan Tofa villages, according to police. Number of casualties not stated. |
| November 6, 2016 | Armed robbers killed 10 traders from Kanoma town on their way to Talatan Mafara market. And a similar attack occurred in Shinkafi LGA earlier |
| November 7, 2016 | Gunmen killed 40 gold miners at mining camp near Gidan Ardo village in Maru LGA |
| November 18, 2016 | Gunmen rustled cattle and kidnapped 40 villagers in Maru LGA |
| November 19, 2016 | 25 people killed by cattle rustlers at Dole, Tudun Bugaje and Kwangwami villages in Zurmi LGA |
| 2016 | Armed men attacked villages in Sabuwa LGA and killed 13 people and stole their cows. |
| January 26, 2017 | Suspected herdsmen killed hunters in Magazu village in Tsafe LGA in a bid to find one Rabo who allegedly stole their cow |
| September 22, 2017 | Gunmen on motorcycles killed an official of FRSC at Tsafe LGA office of FRSC. |



© 2022 Global Journals

| | |
|---|---|
| January 18, 2018 | Gunmen on motorcycles killed 6 people, wounded 4 and abducted 2 sons of a federal legislator at Gora village in Maradun LGA |
| February 14, 2018 | 40 villagers travelling in a truck were killed and set on fire near Birane village in Zurmi LGA |
| January 29, 2019 | Over a dozen killed, 13 kidnapped including a bride in Zurmi LGA |
| March 11, 2019 | Gunmen killed 17 in Zurmi LGA |
| May 23,2019 | Bandits killed 11 and injured many in Ruwan Bore village in Talatan Mafara LGA |
| June 10,2019 | Bandits killed 23 in a reprisal attack on Tunga village Kauran Namoda LGA |
| January 16, 2020 | Gunmen killed 14 in an attack on Babban Rafi Village Gummi LGA |
| March 2, 2020 | Bandits attacked Kujami, Maru LGA, killed 2 people and displaced many. |
| June 21, 2020 | Gunmen attacked Dansadau Maru LGA killing 15 people |
| July 8,2020 | Danfasa village in Maru LGA was invaded by gunmen killing 7, injured 13, 20 women abducted and many animals were rustled. |
| Nov. 22, 2020 | Bandits kidnap 17 worshippers in Maru LGA of Zamfara State |
| Nov. 16, 2020 | 12 Police Officers were kidnap in Zamfara State |
| Oct. 21, 2020 | 22 where killed in Tungar Kwana Talatan Mafara LGA |
| Oct. 30, 2020 | Bandits kill 1 and abducted 10 in Dankurma village in Zamfara State |
| Jan. 8, 2021 | 6 family members were kidnaped in Kadauri Maru LGA |
| Feb. 2, 2021 | Bandits kidnap 27 Jangebe schoolgirls |
| Feb. 26, 2021 | 35 killed in an attack on Sabuwar Tunga, Maru LGA |
| April 21, 2021 | 30 werw killed in an attack on four communities ( Gobirawa, Gora, Rini and Madoti) in Maru LGA |
| Nov. 9, 2021 | 6 people were killed and many abducted in an attack on Rijiya village in Gusau LGA |
| Nov. 29, 2021 | Bandits attacked three communities in Gusau LGA killing 7 and several injured |
| January 9, 2022 | 200 were killed in an attack on Bukuyyum, Anka LGA |
| April 2, 2022 | 13 killed in an attack on three communities: Kadadafa, Rafin gero and Babban baye. |
| April 4, 2022 | Gunmen killed 7 including son of retired commissioner of police in Tsafe town, Tsafe LGA |
| May 6, 2022 | 48 killed in an attack on Sabon garin Damari, Bakura LGA |
| May 8, 2022 | 7 killed in Faru village Maradun LGA |

*Source: Authors Compilation 2022*

*b) Causes of Insecurity in Zamfara State*

Some of the major causes of armed banditry in Zamfara State as stated by CEDDERT, (2018) includes:

- Poverty
- Insensitivity of People in Power
- Rural Neglect
- Corruption
- Unemployment
- Illiteracy

Looking at these causes of armed banditry in Zamfara State, it is to be observed that the phenomenon of Banditry in Zamfara has been driven by criminal quest for economic accumulation in an environment that more or less condones and conduces crimes. This has been worsened by the prevailing socio-economic dissatisfaction and associated livelihood crisis in the state.



© 2022 Global Journals

## IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper ascertained that armed banditry in Zamfara State was as a result of the quest for economic satisfaction and social empowerment looking at the range of causes of this crime as postulated by Bells's Queer Ladder theory. This paper has established that the prevalence of cattle rustling and armed banditry in Zamfara State poses a serious threat to public safety and sustainability of national security in the state, region and country at large. This is in view of the destructive impact of such crime on life, livelihood, property, investment, as well as social wellbeing of the state. Thus, cattle rustling and armed banditry in Zamfara State passes for a crucial issue in Nigeria's national security. To address this problem, a few measures are hereby recommended:

## V. Recommendations

In a state of uncertainty and unending crises, there are several measures government can adopt to mediate the menace. While the government look at stick and carrot approach as an option, a lot more needs to be done to address the cause root of the crises. In the case of the Zamfara crises critical measures need to be taken.

i). Government at all levels should come up with credible and implementable people-oriented policies and programmes to address the basic livelihood problems of poverty, unemployment and the like.

ii). New policies on land use need to be initiated to allow for fair access to land by both the farmers and Fulani herders.

iii). Government need to immediately discourage mass migration of both the Fulani herders and farmers from their settlement by embarking on massive rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes which would be of immense benefit to the farmers and herders.

iv). The government needs to move extra-mile in constructing more road network to link some isolated communities. This would enable both the security agencies and other donor aid agencies in accessing the communities during state of emergency or distribution of relief materials.

v). The government also needs to have strong arrangement with the telecommunication outfits in an attempt to provide effective communication network so that people can be able to communicate to the relevant security agencies and government.

vi). The government need to allow more roles for the traditional rulers to enable them adequately arrest emergency situations and report to the government for action

vii). Government need to extend the provision of social amenities to key rural communities so that people in the rural communities can feel a sense of belonging.

## References Références Referencias


1. Anka, A. S (2017) Emerging Issues in Zamfara Armed Banditry and Cattle Rustling: Collapse of the Peace Deal and Resurgence of Fresh Violence. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development, 6 (12) 161-169.*
2. Bello S (2017), Cattle Rustling in Zamfara State: A challenge to National Security and Economic Development.
3. CEDDERT, (2018). Economic Impact of Rural Banditry on Dansadau and Birnin Gwari Communities of Zamfara and Kaduna States. Centre for Democratic Development and Training, Zaria Research Report 2018.
4. Daniel B. (1965). *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustions of Political Ideas in the Fifties.* Harvard University Press, New York: Free Press. ISBN 0-674-00426-4(Pbk) 127-150
5. Kiruwa M (2017), National President Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, Aged 50, Interview Conducted at Fulbe Villa Hotel Gusau, 12th October 2017.
6. Lyman, P.M.G (2007). *Organized Crime* (4th Ed.) Prentice-Hall: Person Education Inc.
7. Mallory, S. (2007). Theories on the Continued Existence of Organized Crime. Sadbury Massachusetts: Jones and Bartlet Publishers
8. Nwoye, K.O. (2000). *Corruption, Leadership and Dialectics of Development in Africa: An Exploratory Perspective*. Enugu: Associated Printers and Litho.
9. Okoli, A.C and Okpaleke, F (2014). Banditry and Crisis of public safety in Nigeria: Issues in national security strategies. *European Scientific Journal*, 10(4), pp. 350-362.
10. *International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science. (2)3 April, 2014*117
11. Okoli, A.C and Orinya, S (2013). Oil Pipeline Vandalism and Nigeria's National Security. *Global Journal of Human Social Sciences (F: Political Science)*, 13 (3:1.0): 7446.
12. Shehu (2017), The Return of Terro Bandits to Zamfara, Others, (Online Version) Daily Trust, retrieved from www.dailytrust.com 13th December 2017
13. Tangaza H. S (2017) BBC Huusa Report on Fresh Armed Banditry Aired on Tuesday 16th July 2014 at 6:30am News.




© 2022 Global Journals