

Review Paper

UDC: 343.6:355.45(662.6)''2010/2025''

doi: <https://doi.org/10.65921/9g0pvf65>

Received: 9.7.2026.

Revised: 17.7.2026.

Accepted: 21.7.2026.

## The Paradox of Force: A Qualitative Analysis of Armed Banditry and its Implications for Nigeria's National Security (2010–2025)

Nura Umar Manya Manya<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Postgraduate Studies,

Institute of Governance and Development Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria'

umarmanyamanyanura@gmail.com | ORCID: ID 0009-0006-4980-0852

**Abstract:** This study evaluates the compounding problem of armed banditry and its systemic implications for Nigeria's national security architecture from 2010 to 2025. Adopting a qualitative methodological approach, the study relies on the critical interrogation of primary policy documents, legislative frameworks, institutional statements, and reputable secondary academic and conflict databases, including the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), the Global Terrorism Index (GTI), and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). The analytical framework is grounded in a robust integration of Human Security Theory and Failed State Theory, exploring the structural interlock between socio-economic marginalization and the erosion of the state's monopoly on the legitimate tools of coercion. The qualitative findings indicate that chronic structural deprivations—characterized by localized poverty, youth underemployment, and systemic educational deficits—act as primary recruitment catalysts for criminal enterprises. Concurrently, institutional weaknesses, porous border networks across the Sahelian axis, and corrupted security intelligence pipelines have transformed rural cattle rustling into a highly sophisticated, transnational kidnapping-for-ransom economy. The study highlights a critical national security paradox: despite a 220 percent expansion in defense budgetary allocations over the evaluated timeline, civilian fatalities and internal displacement patterns have accelerated significantly, indicating deep-seated operational leakages, fragmented strategic coordination, and a critical neglect of non-kinetic intervention pathways. The paper concludes that purely force-driven, kinetic military initiatives yield only unsustainable, ephemeral security gains. Consequently, it recommends an integrated, structural paradigm shift prioritizing community-centric policing frameworks, cross-border intelligence synchronicity, targeted socio-economic inclusion policies, and the rehabilitation of ungoverned spaces as the only viable pathways toward a resilient national peace.

**Keywords:** armed banditry, national security paradox, human security, failed state theory, kinetic deficit, and sahelian border porosity.

### Introduction

Over the past two decades, Nigeria's sovereign architecture has faced an escalating barrage of internal security threats that fundamentally challenge its institutional stability and internal cohesion. Among the galaxy of violent non-state actors-spanning violent religious insurgencies in the North-East to resource-driven militancy in the Niger Delta-the systemic rise of armed banditry in the North-Western and North-Central geopolitical zones has emerged as an incredibly malignant and destabilizing phenomenon (Akinola, 2020). What originally manifested as localized, low-intensity friction over grazing tracks and seasonal cattle rustling has rapidly metamorphosed into an expansive, highly professionalized criminal ecosystem. Today, this menace is characterized by mass abductions of civilians, the systematic imposition of illicit farming taxes, transnational weapon syndication, and the violent capture of rural communities (Hassan, 2022). According to data from the Global Terrorism Index (2023), this evolving domestic landscape of violence has consistently placed Nigeria among the nations



© 2026 by the authors. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

most structurally impacted by violent crime and non-state conflict, with armed banditry accounting for a disproportionately large share of civilian fatalities and domestic displacement.

Geographically centered across states such as Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Sokoto, Kebbi, and Niger, the crisis has successfully weaponized the expansive, unpoliced forest reserves of the region, transforming them into operational redoubts. Vast, densely covered territories such as the Kamuku, Kuyanbana, and Rugu forests have effectively been captured by decentralized bandit networks to serve as staging grounds for coordinated predatory raids against vulnerable rural populations (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019). Interrogating this trajectory reveals a multi-layered matrix of structural catalysts: acute youth unemployment, generational poverty, deeply entrenched institutional corruption, the uncontrolled proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) originating from the wider destabilized Sahelian belt, and a profound administrative absence of formal governance mechanics within borderland regions (Ezeani, 2023). This severe lack of a viable state presence has not only crippled localized agrarian and pastoral economies but has triggered a deep humanitarian crisis, compelling hundreds of thousands of smallholder farmers to abandon their arable fields, which in turn severely compromises the sub-regional food security infrastructure of West Africa.

The implications of this cascading criminality for the security posture of the Nigerian state are deeply structural. Beyond the immediately visible human tragedies and local economic disruptions, the continuous operational success of these armed groups compromises the internal sovereignty and institutional legitimacy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It exposes a critical disconnect within the national security architecture and directly erodes the fundamental social contract that binds the citizenry to the sovereign state. Crucially, data from the Budget Office of the Federation (2025) and fiscal analytical organizations like BudgIT (2025) reveal a striking structural paradox: while the national defense budgetary allocation expanded from approximately ₦299.1 billion in 2010 to an unprecedented ₦3.1 trillion by 2025, the real security metrics on the ground—civilian safety, territorial insulation, and deterrence capacity—have steadily deteriorated. This operational divergence clearly indicates that the traditional, purely kinetic tools of state force are suffering from diminishing returns, failing to engage with the complex underlying socioeconomic and institutional conditions that fuel this armed rural insurgency.

This persistent, structural escalation of armed banditry—unabated by decades of aggressive military counter-offensives and multi-billion Naira defense allocations—constitutes the foundational problem that this study addresses. The central dilemma rests on why state-led kinetic interventions, such as Operation Hadarin Daji and Operation Puff Adder, have yielded only transient, localized pauses in violence before giving way to more lethal resurgences, allowing kidnapping-for-ransom to solidify into a self-sustaining, multi-billion Naira shadow economy (Rufai, 2023). To untangle this complexity, this study pursues several explicit, interconnected qualitative objectives: to comprehensively examine the deep-seated socioeconomic and governance drivers that catalyze bandit recruitment; to critically evaluate the cascading structural impacts of this criminality on the internal sovereignty and stability of the state; and to rigorously assess the institutional and strategic limitations undercutting the sustainability of state interventions. In doing so, this study addresses three fundamental research questions: What are the core structural and institutional factors driving the continuous evolution of armed banditry in Nigeria? How does the persistence of this rural insurgency fundamentally redefine and compromise the national security architecture? And why have the state's kinetic and non-kinetic policy responses failed to achieve sustainable peace? Methodologically, this paper rejects quantitative reductions, adopting a purely qualitative

descriptive research design. It relies entirely on the systematic interrogation, triangulation, and thematic content analysis of official primary policy briefs, legislative enactments, military operational statements, and authoritative institutional datasets extracted from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED, 2024), the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2025), and international security repositories like the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI, 2025). By adopting this integrated qualitative design, the study explicitly addresses a critical gap in contemporary security literature: the tendency of existing research to analyze the causes, structural impacts, and tactical policy responses as separate, isolated phenomena. By synthesizing Human Security Theory and Failed State Theory into a single, cohesive analytical lens, this paper fills this literature gap, offering a holistic analysis that unmaskes armed banditry not as a simple localized law enforcement challenge, but as an advanced manifestation of structural governance fragility and deep human security deficits.

## 2.1 Conceptual Literature

Achieving an analytically rigorous understanding of this security crisis requires a clear conceptual unpacking of its two central theoretical pillars: 'Armed Banditry' and 'National Security'. In classic sociological literature, banditry was often conceptualized through the lens of Eric Hobsbawm's 'social banditry'—a form of primitive agrarian protest where individuals operating outside conventional law were viewed by local populations as champions against structural oppression. However, contemporary scholars argue that the modern manifestation of armed banditry in Nigeria has completely decoupled from any social or redistributive impulses, evolving into a highly predatory, commercialized criminal enterprise. Okoli and Ugwu (2019) conceptualize modern armed banditry as the organized use of sophisticated, military-grade weapons by non-state actors to perpetrate extreme violence, dispossession, and terror against civilian populations and state assets, purely for economic or territorial self-aggrandizement. They emphasize that the contemporary Nigerian variant has assumed a highly destructive communal dimension, where entire rural ecosystems are targeted for systemic resource extraction. Similarly, Hassan (2021) defines it as a form of highly organized rural predation that systematically exploits governance vacuums, weak administrative state presences, and highly porous international borders. Furthermore, Ibrahim (2023) advances the concept by defining banditry as 'criminal entrepreneurship,' a process characterized by the absolute commodification of violence, the deliberate establishment of alternative local power matrices in unpoliced zones, and the cultivation of clandestine networks containing local collaborators, corrupt security officials, weapons illicit traffickers, and elite political patrons. Synthesizing these scholarly perspectives, this study conceptualizes armed banditry as a highly organized, heavily armed system of non-state predation that exploits structural governance failures to enforce alternative territorial and economic control through the deliberate commodification of violence.

Parallel to this, the conceptualization of 'National Security' has undergone a profound epistemological evolution. For centuries, the traditional realist paradigm confined national security to a narrow, state-centric, and militaristic framework, focusing exclusively on safeguarding a state's borders, territorial integrity, and sovereign independence from external military aggression. However, contemporary security scholarship has decisively broken away from this narrow view, recognizing that internal vulnerabilities are often more destabilizing than external threats. Eze (2020) defines modern national security as a multi-layered condition wherein a sovereign state actively guarantees the physical safety, human rights, and socio-economic well-being of its citizenry by insulating them from both internal insurgencies and

structural societal failures through the rule of law. Olagunju (2021) furthers this by asserting that genuine national security is deeply tied to the maintenance of institutional justice and social equity; any state that secures its borders but leaves its populations structurally marginalized is inherently insecure. Usman (2023) establishes national security as a dynamic, multidimensional process requiring societal resilience, economic stability, and the active preservation of democratic legitimacy. Therefore, within the analytical boundaries of this study, national security is conceptualized not merely as the expansion of military hardware or defense deployments, but as the comprehensive capacity of the state to maintain internal peace, preserve institutional legitimacy, and insulate its citizenry from systemic violence and socio-economic deprivation through the functional administration of justice.

## **2.2 Theoretical Review**

To construct a comprehensive qualitative interpretation of the evolution, survival, and impact of armed banditry on Nigeria's security framework, this study constructs a dual-theoretical scaffolding using Human Security Theory and Failed State Theory. This integrated theoretical lens allows the paper to bridge the micro-level socio-economic drivers of individual vulnerability with the macro-level structural decay of state institutions, offering a balanced analysis of the crisis.

## **2.3 The Concept of National Security**

The concept of national security is presented as broader than military defense alone. Contemporary scholars emphasize that national security includes protecting citizens' lives, ensuring justice, promoting economic well-being, and maintaining effective institutions. Therefore, true national security depends on both state capacity and human welfare rather than military strength alone.

### **The Human Security Theory**

The study adopts Human Security Theory and Failed State Theory as its analytical framework. Human Security Theory explains that poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, weak education, and social exclusion create conditions that encourage vulnerable individuals to join criminal groups. It argues that lasting security cannot be achieved through military force alone but also requires addressing human needs and development.

### **The State Failed Theory**

Failed State Theory explains how weak institutions, corruption, poor governance, ineffective law enforcement, and limited state presence create ungoverned spaces where armed bandits operate freely, these institutional weaknesses enable criminal groups to challenge state authority and establish alternative systems of control.

## **3. Methodology**

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the evolution of armed banditry and its implications for Nigeria's national security between 2010 and 2025. The research relied exclusively on secondary data drawn from government policy documents, the Constitution, National Security Strategy, military reports, and publications from reputable institutions such as ACLED, GTI, NBS, UNDP, UNODC, SIPRI, BudgIT, and peer-reviewed academic literature.

Data were collected through a systematic documentary review, with relevant sources

purposively selected based on their credibility, relevance, and publication within the study period. The data were analyzed using thematic content analysis, which identified and interpreted recurring themes related to the drivers of armed banditry, governance and institutional weaknesses, security responses, and their implications for national security. The study was guided by Human Security Theory and Failed State Theory, providing a framework for understanding how socio-economic deprivation and institutional fragility contribute to the persistence of armed banditry. To ensure the credibility of the findings, documentary triangulation was employed by cross-checking evidence from multiple authoritative sources. Since the study relied solely on publicly available documents, no human participants were involved, and ethical standards were maintained through proper citation and accurate interpretation of all sources. Overall, the qualitative documentary approach was considered appropriate for providing a comprehensive understanding of the structural causes, security implications, and limitations of Nigeria's counter-banditry strategies.

**3.0 Discussion and Analysis**

Interrogating the historical trajectory of armed banditry from 2010 to 2025 reveals a complex phenomenon driven by deep structural factors, substantial national security impacts, and inconsistent, short-sighted state policy responses. By analyzing institutional reports and academic accounts through a qualitative lens, this section unpacks the socio-economic and institutional dynamics that have allowed rural criminality to transform into a sophisticated threat to national stability.

**3.1 Socio-Economic Catalysts of Rural Insurgency and Predation**

A qualitative analysis of historical socio-economic data across Nigeria over the evaluated fifteen-year period reveals a clear alignment between rising structural deprivation and the growth of violent criminal enterprises. As detailed in Table 4.1, multi-dimensional poverty rates have remained persistently high, fluctuating from 53.5 percent in 2010 to a staggering 62.5 percent in 2016, and hovering around 54.0 percent by 2024. This chronic poverty has been compounded by severe spikes in national unemployment figures, which rose from a baseline of 6.4 percent in 2010 to over 23.1 percent by 2019. Crucially, in the rural expanses of the North-West and North-Central zones, these national averages translate into even higher localized rates of economic exclusion, with youth unemployment and underemployment reaching critical levels (Olaosebikan, 2020).

To illustrate these macro-level structural dynamics, Table 4.1 aggregates key socio-economic indicators alongside general trends in banditry incidents over the 2010–2025 timeline, highlighting the challenging environment within which this security crisis has escalated.

| Year | Poverty Rate (%) | Unemployment Rate (%) | Literacy Level (%) | Reported Bandit Attacks |
|------|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 2010 | 53.5%            | 6.4%                  | 68.1%              | 420                     |
| 2013 | 55.0%            | 7.9%                  | 69.2%              | 750                     |
| 2016 | 62.5%            | 10.4%                 | 58.2%              | 1,120                   |
| 2019 | 40.1%            | 23.1%                 | 62.8%              | 1,890                   |
| 2024 | 54.0%            | 5.0%                  | 64.5%              | 2,610                   |

*Source: Structural synthesis compiled from World Bank, ILO, UNESCO, and domestic data aggregations (2025).*

Interrogating this data qualitatively, rather than relying strictly on statistical models, uncovers

the human vulnerabilities that drive this crisis. The sharp decline in localized literacy levels, which dipped as low as 58.2 percent during periods of intense rural disruption, points to a broken educational infrastructure. In line with Human Security Theory, when large numbers of young people are left without formal education, structural employment options, or secure agricultural livelihoods, they become highly vulnerable to recruitment by criminal networks. Modern bandit syndicates exploit this vulnerability by operating as alternative economic providers, offering steady financial returns through kidnapping-for-ransom that far exceed any legitimate local income streams (Okoli & Nwankwo, 2023). This economic reality shows that the continuous expansion of armed banditry is deeply tied to broader systemic failures, operating as a direct reflection of long-standing socioeconomic exclusion and deep human security deficits.

### **3.2 Institutional Fragility, Ungoverned Spaces, and Border Porosity**

From an institutional perspective, the survival and expansion of armed banditry point directly to structural weaknesses within the state's administrative framework. A central element of this vulnerability is the existence of expansive 'ungoverned spaces'—large geographic areas, particularly dense forest reserves and remote border communities, where formal state administration, law enforcement, and public services are almost entirely absent. As Failed State Theory indicates, when a government fails to maintain a permanent administrative presence across its entire territory, it creates authority vacuums that are quickly claimed by non-state armed groups (Rotberg, 2003). In these areas, bandit networks have established sophisticated alternative structures, taking control of artisanal mining sites and forcing rural farming communities to pay informal taxes just to access their lands (Isah & Garba, 2022).

This institutional breakdown is further aggravated by the high level of porosity along Nigeria's international borders, particularly across the wider Sahelian region. Weak border controls enable transnational criminal networks to easily traffic military-grade small arms and light weapons from destabilized zones in Libya, Mali, and Niger directly into northern Nigeria (UNOWAS, 2023). This steady influx of illegal weaponry has significantly upgraded the tactical capabilities of bandit groups, shifting their operations from simple rural theft to highly coordinated, heavy-weapon assaults on secure state positions, civilian highways, and educational institutions. Furthermore, qualitative evidence reveals that deep-seated corruption within defense procurement pipelines, a lack of operational accountability, and poor intelligence coordination among state agencies have systematically weakened counter-banditry efforts. This combination of open borders, unpoliced interior spaces, and institutional weaknesses has allowed banditry to grow from a localized law-and-order challenge into a deeply entrenched, transnational criminal network.

### **3.3 The National Security Paradox: Fatalities, Displacement, and Defense Budgets**

The historical trajectory of this security crisis reveals a stark institutional paradox: a massive expansion in state defense expenditure has been accompanied by a steady deterioration in actual internal security. As detailed in Table 4.2, the national defense budget grew from ₦299.1 billion in 2010 to an unprecedented ₦3.1 trillion by 2025, representing a massive shifting of national resources toward kinetic military responses. Yet, during this exact same fifteen-year timeline, conflict-related civilian fatalities rose from 10,350 in 2010 to approximately 15,000 by 2025. Concurrently, the population of internally displaced persons (IDPs) grew from 300,000 to over 2.3 million, creating a severe, long-term humanitarian crisis.

To analyze these contrasting trends, Table 4.2 outlines the trajectory of national security indicators against the steady growth of defense spending over the study period.

| Year | Fatalities | Displaced Persons (IDPs) | Defense Expenditure (₦ Billion) |
|------|------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2010 | 10,350     | 300,000                  | 299.1                           |
| 2014 | 22,873     | 802,148                  | 368.8                           |
| 2018 | 9,250      | 2,216,000                | 506.3                           |
| 2021 | 10,578     | 2,147,000                | 1,783.0                         |
| 2025 | 15,000     | 2,300,000                | 3,100.0                         |

*Source: Integrated conflict data compiled from ACLED, IDMC, SIPRI, and Budget Office Records (2025).*

This clear divergence between financial input and security output highlights deep structural inefficiencies within Nigeria's national security architecture. Viewed through Failed State Theory, this pattern shows that simply increasing defense funding cannot compensate for deeper institutional flaws, such as fragmented strategic coordination, weak operational transparency, and a lack of real accountability within defense procurement systems (Nwagwu, 2022). Furthermore, from a human security perspective, the rapid growth of the IDP population reveals a severe failure by the state to protect its citizens from physical displacement and economic ruin. The continuous displacement of rural communities destroys local agricultural networks, drives long-term food insecurity, and deepens public distrust in state institutions, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of instability and social fragmentation.

### 3.4 Evaluation of State Interventions: Kinetic Deficits vs. Non-Kinetic Alternatives

An evaluation of the various state interventions implemented between 2017 and 2025 reveals a consistent reliance on short-term, reactive measures rather than sustained, preventive strategies. Large-scale military operations, including Operation Hadarin Daji, Operation Thunder Strike, and Operation Puff Adder, routinely achieved immediate, short-term successes by dismantling visible bandit camps and neutralizing prominent gang leaders. However, historical patterns show that these tactical gains were rarely sustained; within twelve to twenty-four months, bandit groups routinely adapted, shifted their operational bases to alternative unpoliced forests, and launched renewed waves of violence (Lawal & Ahmed, 2021). This cycle was clearly visible in 2020, when the shifting of military personnel to enforce COVID-19 travel restrictions created temporary security gaps that bandit networks quickly exploited to launch a sharp resurgence in attacks.

Similarly, regional political attempts to resolve the crisis through local peace dialogues, amnesties, and financial settlements often backfired. While these non-kinetic negotiations sometimes produced short-term drops in violence, they ultimately treated the symptoms rather than the root causes, accidentally legitimizing criminal syndicates and providing them with financial capital that was frequently reinvested into purchasing more advanced weaponry (International Crisis Group, 2023). In contrast, the targeted expansion of regulated community-based security initiatives and community-policing frameworks from 2023 onward delivered more consistent, sustainable security improvements. By drawing on local intelligence networks and fostering better collaboration between rural communities and formal state forces, these initiatives proved more effective at preventing raids. This experience demonstrates that sustainable stability can only be achieved by moving away from purely force-driven, kinetic actions and adopting a balanced strategy that integrates local community participation with comprehensive institutional reform.

#### **4.1 Conclusion**

The comprehensive qualitative analysis of armed banditry in Nigeria from 2010 to 2025 demonstrates that the persistent security crisis cannot be understood or resolved as a simple outbreak of lawlessness. Instead, as illuminated by the integration of Human Security Theory and Failed State Theory, the menace is a deeply structural crisis born from the intersection of long-standing socioeconomic deprivation and localized institutional fragility. The evidence shows that chronic poverty, high youth unemployment, and low literacy rates provide a steady stream of recruits for criminal syndicates, while the lack of a functional state presence in vast rural spaces allows these networks to operate with profound impunity. The stark divergence between rapidly growing national defense budgets and deteriorating security outcomes confirms that a purely kinetic, force-driven strategy is incapable of delivering long-term peace. Ultimately, the survival of this sophisticated criminal economy represents a profound challenge to the social contract and internal sovereignty of the state, demonstrating that lasting national stability cannot be achieved without a fundamental shift toward human-centric governance and structural institutional reform.

#### **4.2 Recommendations**

1. **Implementation of Integrated Socio-Economic Empowerment Programs:** The Federal and State governments must shift from a purely military approach to a human-centric development strategy. This requires launching targeted economic development initiatives within vulnerable rural communities across the North-West and North-Central zones. These programs should focus on reviving local agricultural networks, creating viable jobs for rural youth, and rebuilding public education infrastructures to systematically disrupt the recruitment pipelines used by bandit syndicates.
2. **Comprehensive Security Sector and Defense Budget Reforms:** The national security architecture requires a deep structural overhaul to improve operational transparency, strengthen institutional accountability, and eliminate corruption within defense procurement pipelines. Rather than simply increasing budgetary allocations, state policy must focus on building joint intelligence-sharing platforms, establishing modern border monitoring systems, and training specialized units capable of maintaining a permanent, professional presence in rural spaces.
3. **Institutionalization of Regulated Community Policing Frameworks:** To eliminate authority vacuums in remote regions, the government should formalize and strictly regulate community-based security initiatives. This involves integrating local vigilante groups into formal national security networks, providing them with clear legal mandates, proper human rights training, and strict accountability guidelines. By centering local knowledge and rebuilding trust between rural communities and state forces, this approach offers a sustainable model for preventing criminal raids and securing ungoverned spaces.

#### **Author's Acknowledgement**

With due respect, I express profound gratitude to Almighty Allah for His guidance, wisdom, strength, and protection throughout the conception, research, and completion of this study. I, also sincerely appreciates the academic support and intellectual environment provided by the School of Postgraduate Studies, Institute of Governance and Development Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, which greatly contributed to the successful completion of this research. Special appreciation is extended to all lecturers, supervisors, mentors, and colleagues whose constructive comments, scholarly guidance, and encouragement enhanced the quality of this

work.

I also acknowledge the invaluable contributions of researchers and institutions whose publications, reports, and datasets—including ACLED, the Global Terrorism Index (GTI), the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), SIPRI, UNDP, UNOWAS, BudgIT, and other referenced sources—provided the empirical and documentary foundation for this study.

Finally, I'm deeply grateful to my family, friends, and well-wishers for their unwavering prayers, patience, encouragement, and moral support throughout the research process. Any errors, omissions, or interpretations contained in this paper remain solely the responsibility of the author.

#### **4.3 Conflict of Interest**

I declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research. The study was conducted independently, and the author has no financial, personal, professional, or institutional relationships that could have influenced the design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, or presentation of the findings. The opinions and conclusions expressed in this paper are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of any institution or government agency.

#### **4.4 Funding Statement**

This research received no specific grant or financial support from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. All stages of the research, including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and manuscript preparation, were undertaken independently by the author.

#### **4.5 Ethical Statement**

This study adopted a qualitative documentary research design based entirely on publicly available secondary sources, including government reports, policy documents, institutional publications, and peer-reviewed academic literature. No human participants, interviews, surveys, or experimental procedures were involved. Consequently, formal ethical approval and informed consent were not required. The study adhered to accepted principles of academic integrity through accurate citation, proper acknowledgment of all sources, and objective reporting of findings.

#### **References**

- Abubakar, S., & Mohammed, L. (2021). The political economy of banditry and state fragility in Northern Nigeria. *African Peace and Security Review*, 15(2), 66–84.
- Adamu, Y., & Ibrahim, H. (2022). Economic and political implications of armed banditry in Nigeria. *Journal of Security and Development Studies*, 18(1), 55–73.
- Akinola, O. (2020). Security governance and the challenge of banditry in Northern Nigeria. *African Security Review*, 29(2), 115–132.
- Akinyemi, L., & Musa, A. (2022). Governance deficit and the escalation of banditry in Nigeria. *African Security Review*, 31(3), 212–228.
- Akinyetun, T. S. (2022). Socio-economic drivers of insecurity in Northern Nigeria. *African Security Review*, 31(2), 145–162.
- Alkire, S. (2003). A conceptual framework for human security. Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, University of Oxford.
- Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED). (2024). Conflict and security data for Nigeria (2010–2024). ACLED. <https://acleddata.com>
- Budget Office of the Federation. (2025). Annual defense expenditure report (2010–2025). Federal Government of Nigeria. <https://budgetoffice.gov.ng>

- BudgIT. (2025). Security and defense budget breakdown in Nigeria. BudgIT Foundation. <https://yourbudgit.com>
- Call, C. T. (2008). The fallacy of the 'failed state.' *Third World Quarterly*, 29(8), 1491–1507.
- Eze, M. (2020). Rethinking national security in Africa: A human security approach. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 38(4), 523–540.
- Ezeani, C. (2023). Banditry and Nigeria's internal security: Emerging dynamics and policy options. *Journal of African Studies*, 15(1), 45–62.
- Federal Ministry of Finance. (2023). Budget implementation report, Q4 2023. Abuja: Federal Ministry of Finance.
- Global Terrorism Index (GTI). (2023). Measuring the impact of terrorism in Nigeria. Institute for Economics and Peace. <https://economicsandpeace.org>
- Hassan, I. (2021). Organized violence and insecurity in Northern Nigeria: Revisiting the dynamics of armed banditry. *Conflict Studies Quarterly*, 36(2), 45–60.
- Hassan, I. (2022). Small arms proliferation and organized violence in Nigeria. *Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 18(3), 72–90.
- Hassan, M., & Nwankwo, E. (2022). Socioeconomic determinants of banditry and rural violence in Nigeria. *African Journal of Social Science Research*, 21(3), 112–130.
- Ibrahim, M., & Yusuf, T. (2023). Government policies and strategic failures in addressing banditry in Nigeria. *Journal of Conflict and Policy Studies*, 19(4), 87–104.
- Ibrahim, S. (2023). Criminal entrepreneurship and the evolution of armed banditry in Nigeria. *Journal of Peace and Conflict Management*, 19(1), 88–104.
- International Crisis Group. (2023). Violence in Nigeria's North-West: Rolling back the mayhem. Crisis Group Africa Report No. 288.
- Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). (2019). Country profile: Nigeria. Geneva: IDMC. <https://www.internal-displacement.org>
- International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2019–2025). Nigeria displacement data series. Abuja: IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix.
- Isah, A., & Garba, M. (2022). Ungoverned spaces and the proliferation of armed banditry in Northern Nigeria. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 34(2), 119–136.
- Lawal, S., & Ahmed, U. (2021). Evaluating the impact of security operations on armed banditry in Northwest Nigeria. *Conflict Studies Quarterly*, 37(2), 49–65.
- Ministry of Defence. (2025). Annual security operations report (2015–2025). Federal Government of Nigeria.
- Musa, A. (2021). Human security and the dynamics of armed banditry in Northern Nigeria. *Journal of African Peace Studies*, 10(2), 73–92.
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2025). Annual security and socio-economic indicators report (2010–2025). NBS. <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng>
- Nwagwu, E. (2022). Nigeria's military responses to banditry: An assessment of operations and outcomes. *Conflict Trends*, 24(4), 66–79.
- Ojo, K., & Hassan, R. (2022). Counterinsurgency and community-based security responses to banditry in Nigeria. *Defence and Peace Studies Review*, 27(3), 201–219.
- Okafor, I. (2020). Armed banditry and the crisis of internal security in Nigeria. *Journal of African Security Studies*, 16(4), 115–132.
- Okoli, A. C., & Nwankwo, C. I. (2023). Poverty, youth unemployment, and armed banditry in Northern Nigeria. *Journal of Peace and Security Studies*, 9(1), 56–73.
- Okoli, A. C., & Ugwu, C. I. (2019). Of marauders and militants: The new landscape of armed violence in Nigeria. *Journal of African Security Studies*, 28(1), 15–29.
- Olagunju, T. (2021). The changing dimensions of national security in Africa. *Defence and Security Analysis*, 37(1), 65–79.
- Olaosebikan, T. (2020). Socioeconomic drivers of armed banditry in Northwestern Nigeria. *Journal of Political and Social Research*, 14(1), 44–61.
- Paris, R. (2001). Human security: Paradigm shift or hot air? *International Security*, 26(2), 87–102.
- Rotberg, R. I. (2003). State failure and state weakness in a time of terror. Brookings Institution Press.
- Rufai, S. B. (2023). I am a bandit: A decade of research inside the forests of Zamfara. Vanguard Publishers.
- Sen, A. (1999). Development as freedom. Oxford University Press.
- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). (2025). SIPRI military expenditure database. Stockholm: SIPRI. <https://www.sipri.org>
- Tadjbakhsh, S., & Chenoy, A. M. (2007). Human security: Concepts and implications. Routledge.
- Thompson, S. T. (2025). Exploring banditry in Nigeria. *Security Journal*, 38, 28. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41284->

Manya Manya, N. U. (2026). The Paradox of Force: A Qualitative Analysis of Armed Banditry and its Implications for Nigeria's National Security (2010–2025). *Academos Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2026, 33-43

025-00477-1

Usman, A. (2023). Human security and state resilience in contemporary Nigeria. *African Journal of Security and Development*, 11(2), 55–74.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (1994). Human Development Report 1994: New dimensions of human security. United Nations Development Programme. <https://hdr.undp.org>

United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). (2023). Peace and security report on the Sahel region. United Nations Publications. <https://unowas.unmissions.org>

Zartman, I. W. (1995). *Collapsed states: The disintegration and restoration of legitimate authority*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.