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**From Grievance To Greed: An Interrogation Of State Collapse And Warlordism In
Banditry Torn Nigeria's Northwest Region**

by

ROSENJE, Musharafa Olapeju (PhD).

Department of Political Science,
Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun,
P. M. B. 2118, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.
Email: rosenjemo@tasued.edu.ng
Phone No.: +2348074294124; 07065798489.

&

PEJU-ROSENJE, Temitope O.

Department of Political Science,
Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun,
P. M. B. 2118, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.
Email: pejurosenjetemitope@gmail.com
Phone No.: +2348085196011

&

ADENIYI, Oluwatobi Peter

Department of Political Science
Tai Solarin University of Education,
Ijagun, P. M. B. 2118, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State.
Email Address: oluwatobiadeniyi30@gmail.com
Phone Number: +2347035474264 & 08116844154

&

SALAMI, Nofiu Olamikulehin

Department of Political Science
Sikiru Adetona College of Education, Science and Technology, Omu-Ajose,
P.M.B 2128, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State.
Email Address: anofiumaolana@gmail.com
Phone Number: 08039469637

Abstract

Globally, strong leadership is required to ensure security of lives and properties, and respond promptly and sharply to any security challenge that may arise in governance. In some developing nations, such as Nigeria, the leadership is, however, perceived to be usually weak giving room for many non-state actors to incessantly harass the people,

undermine and confront the government with impunity. This paper investigated the emergence of warlords in banditry torn Nigeria's North-west by examining the crisis, which began as a grievance of the Fulani herders but later transformed into greed due to state collapse. Descriptive research method was adopted, while data were collected through secondary sources. Grievance and greed theory, and failed state theory were utilised as theoretical framework. The paper observed that when the warlords noticed the huge profits accruing from 'ransom taking' and 'rent-seeking', banditry, which started as a justice-seeking phenomenon was transformed into loot-seeking practice. It revealed that this situation was caused, among others, by state collapse and aggravated by the inadequacies of the security agencies. It canvassed that the several efforts made by governments at various levels to frontally confront the scourge were belated, uncoordinated, inadequate and consequently ineffective. It concluded that if the government fails to take a decisive measure, armed banditry in the region will remain prolonged and intractable, while the warlords will continue to grow fat from the proceeds of "ransom-taking", "rent-seeking" and other criminalities thus paving way for the emergence of warlords, who now command respect, status and influence in the region. It therefore, recommended that the Nigerian state should wield the strong political will to confront the scourge head-on and deal decisively with the warlords in accordance with the law to serve as deterrent to others. Also, the security personnel should be well equipped and motivated to successfully prosecute the war.

Keywords: Armed banditry, Fulani herders, Grievance and greed, North-west Nigeria, State collapse, Warlords,

Introduction

The state is often regarded as the moderating apparatus in individual's quest for wealth acquisition and accumulation through the instrumentality of established laws and institutions. Hence, wealth, in civilised societies is lawfully acquired or accumulated through legitimate process and the dint of hard work though there may be element of providence. However, what obtains currently among the bandits in Nigeria's North-west region negates this philosophy. In Nigeria's North-west region of contemporary era, the phenomena of grievance and greed have collectively led to the emergence of warlords consequent upon the pervasiveness and escalation of armed banditry and the concomitant ransom-taking and rent-seeking in the region. The North-west, with its vast forests and wetlands is characterised by agrarian economy, where both Fulani herders and Hausa farmers have historically co-existed and have been carrying on their agrarian practices over decades with relative peace and tranquility (Rosenje & Adeniyi, 2021; Doyin 2017). Agriculture is the bedrock of the economy of states in Northwest Nigeria as nearly 70percent of their population is reliant on agriculture and hence the mainstay of Northwest economy (Okojie, 2023).

Though land has been a major resource for the sustenance of agriculture in the region, it has nevertheless been the cause of conflict between the herders and the farmers. This crisis has led to the emergence of armed banditry by the Fulani herders, first to protect their collective interest as a social group and as a retaliatory assault against the purported Hausa farmers' attack on their cattle. Land and water resources have thus become the object of scramble between the

opportunistic warlords and the farmers, and the cause of lethal attacks on the rural dwellers. In effect, armed banditry in Nigeria's North-west has been contradictory: it has been a blessing as well as a curse, becoming profit-driven enterprise, generating both revenue to warlords and criminality to the region (Anyadike, 2023; Rufa'i, 2018).

For many years now, the scourge has created a lot of challenges for the region, manifesting in kidnapping, killing, cattle rustling, armed robbery, raping of women and the girl-child, and willful destruction of farmlands, among others. Incidences of armed banditry in the North-west, which have spiralled over the years and clandestinely crept into Northcentral have of recent, also snowballed into Southwest region (Rosenje & Peju-Rosenje, 2022). These incidences have for instance, broadened in scope, such that the occurrences have surged by 731% between 2018 and 2022 (from 124 to 1,031 incidents) and there were around 13,485 banditry-related deaths between 2010 and May 2023 (Sadiq & Ojewale, 2023). This scenario is rather worrisome, considering the primacy of agriculture to the sustenance of the Northwest economy and the security of lives of individuals living in that region.

The increasingly alarming occurrence and travails of armed banditry in Nigeria's North-west has caught the attention of scholars and policymakers alike. Though there abound many scholarly works such as Abraham and Auwalu (2022), Okoli (2021), Rufai (2021), Ahmed (2021), Adegoke (2020), Okoli and Ugwu (2019), Abdullahi (2019), Mustapha (2019) and Jaafar (2018) on the various aspects of this phenomenon, most of these existing scholarly works on armed banditry in the Northwest have concentrated on the political economy of organised crime and violence, with disproportionate emphasis on how the factors of "grievance" and "greed" have collectively provided impetus for the emergence of warlords with their extractive tendencies in the region. For ease of progression, this paper is divided into five segments. The first segment treats the conceptual clarification and theoretical framework while the second segment investigates the dynamics propelling warlordism in Nigeria's Northwest. The third segment unravels the emergence, trends and exploits of warlords in Nigeria's Northwest banditry and the fourth segment examines state collapse as precursor of the emergent warlordism. The last segment, which is the fifth one, gives the conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptualisation Clarification

Grievance and Greed

Greed and grievances are models employed by scholars of conflict to explain why conflicts and civil wars happen. They have been used by scholars to depict a situation where group leaders abuse the original intent of a script in such a manner as to profit from the process.

As a phraseology, 'greed and grievance' is a theoretic contribution modeled by Collier and Hoeffler first in 1998 and later advanced in 1999, 2001, 2002 and 2004. The model explains how civil and ethnic wars start by looking at the reasons behind civil wars in order to understand why they occur. It is often predicated on a proposition of deprivation argument, which attributes greed or grievance as the root causes of conflict (Paolo, 2020).

The term greed refers to a strong, excessive, extreme, unquenchable and self-serving desire for anything, particularly power or fortune, or social values like influence or prestige. Grievance on the other hand, refers to something that is perceived to be unfair and can cause protest; a sense of being maltreated. It could also mean a real or imagined wrong that incites wrath and is considered cause for complaint. Greed advocates averred that the fighters in armed conflicts are driven by the desire to improve their lot in life by conducting a somewhat random cost-benefit analysis to determine whether joining a rebellion will profit them more than staying out of it. They held that the self-interested material gain that drives rebels and armed groups is frequently linked to the exploitation and ownership of important economic resources like lumber, diamonds, and oil. Thus, mobilisation is facilitated by control over a strategic resource.

The import of the greed thesis holds that rebel organisations organising an uprising against the current political elite are to blame for conflicts and civil wars because of their rapacious attitude (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Sachs & Warner, 2001). The desire of rebel groups to take advantage of possibilities held by the ruling class in politics, government, and society at large is always the source of their greed. These kinds of desired chances usually fall into one of three categories; political domination, economic gain, or geographic advantage (Murshed 2009).

Grievance refers to the claim that, beside economic concerns, people rebel against crises of identity, such as race, religion and social status, among others. The grievance scholars hold that civil unrest is likely ensues in nations that exhibit socio-political divisions and cleavages. Sentiments that could spark a civil war could likely occur among a populace experiencing political repression, instability, or pervasive feelings of deprivation or discrimination based on race or class. The grievance argument states that there are two traits that all civil wars have in common. First, there is the belief held by certain segments of the civil society that a revolution could improve the

unjust socio-political situation. Second, the civil war aims to topple the ruling ethnic or religious group, the privileged class, and the exploitative, abusive, and greedy political elite (Keen, 2012 as cited in Paolo, 2020). Grievance is associated with the assertion that one has to overcome an injustice or an unfavourable situation that causes significant grief, psychological pain, a sense of oppression, and an impression of injustice among a subset of the public. Grievance stems from four drives which are economic disparity, political repression, political exclusion, and hatred of a certain ethnicity or religion (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004).

Furthermore, in Gurr (2015) contribution to the grievance model, he contended that relative deprivation plays a central role above all others in the emergence of conflicts and rebellions. When peoples' expectation does not align with what they get in reality, this situation tends to result in feelings of deprivation: economic, political, or social. Often times, rebel leaders or factions motivated by greed have the ability to control rebel organisations and capitalise on a grievance narrative for their own financial gain. The import here is that there are cases in which grievances may arise as a result of deprivation or marginalisation to the momentum may take on a new dimension as a result of greed on the part of leaders. This is being conceived as the situation unfolding in the banditry consuming the Northwest region.

Warlord

Etymologically assessed, "warlord" was initially used in 1856 by American poet and philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson in a piercingly critical essay written against the English nobility (Emerson, 1902). The terminology, which emanated from the Japanese *gunbatsu* parlance, and Chinese *Junfa* lexicon during the First World War became popularised in the 1920s, when it was used to describe the anarchy that followed 1918, when local control was seized by provincial military leaders, ushering in the era that would become known as the Warlord Era in China (Waldron, 1991).

A lot of definitions have been offered by scholars to explain the term "warlord". Ordinarily, warlords are perceived as lords of war, who are mostly local strongmen that run fiefdom-like territories independently of the government. Waldron (1991) contended that a warlord is a person who, mostly through the use of coercive control, exercises military, economic, and political domination over an area, frequently in a nation lacking a strong national government. Warlordism is, therefore, regarded as an authoritarian power founded on the basis of regional monopoly on

violence that has attained somewhat positive sovereignty, that is, the ability to rule a geographical area by coercion, but without being recognised internationally. However, Vinci (2007) in his contributions to the phenomenon of warlord identified four fundamental traits that define a warlord namely: independent political entity; control over a specific territory; violence compliant; and continued use of violence to sustain power.

Still on the debate on warlordism, Giustozzi (2005) conceived a warlord as a charismatic, military commander due to his capacity to render critical functions like coordination, leadership, and logistics, among others, to his subordinate commanders. In Lezhnev's classical work (2005), warlord uses force, which is inspired primarily by economic consideration. This perception concluded that apart from financial resources, the warlord's primary motivations, among others, include fame, fortune, and power. Warlord's political influence is inextricably tied to his military prowess. The warlords habitually use violence to either sustain their power or restore their authority (Ahram & King, 2012; Marten, 2006; Jackson, 2003; MacKinlay, 1998). From the foregoing explication, warlords are considered as those willing to sacrifice thousands of lives, land, and property to sustain their power and as such considered to be tremendously driven by personal power, social status, honour and monetary gain.

Armed Banditry

Armed banditry is not a new phenomenon in scholarly discourse. The body of knowledge about armed banditry is expanding in scope and dimensions as it has evolved over time, across geographic location and under various conditions. In the 19th century, a bandit was a freedom fighter in Europe and the America, with part of their mission being to secure the liberation of the oppressed from the upper class or colonised over the colonizer and was celebrated as heroes (Warto, 1994, cited in Ahmad & Jamilu, 2022). Armed banditry in recent times has, however, been used to describe instances and occurrences in which defenceless people have been attacked, murdered, abducted, held hostage, raped, and had their property and livestock pilfered (Amusan, Adebowale & Samuel, 2019).

Ejiofor (2022) for instance, contended that armed bandits are organised criminal groups that operate in local communities in quest of economic opportunities rather than having obvious political or ideological affiliations. Uche and Iwuamadi (2018) canvassed that banditry is reflected in criminal activities such as cattle rustling, kidnapping, armed robbery, drug abuse, arson, rape,

and the heinous and blatant killing of members of agrarian communities by suspected herdsmen using sophisticated weapons. Armed banditry is thus motivated more by personal economic gain and profit motive rather than by political, ideological, or other narrow interests. This is why bandits attack communities of all faiths and ethnicities in the area with equal savagery, showing no discrimination in their attacks (Laleye, 2021; Adamu & Abdullahi, 2021).

International Crisis Group (2020) perceives armed banditry as many criminal organisations that engage in widespread cattle rustling, sexual assault, kidnapping, armed robbery, plunder, and attacks on gold miners and traders. In other words, armed banditry is often conceived as the act of raiding and attacking victims by members of an armed group, whether planned or not, with the intention of overpowering the victim, obtaining loot, particularly in semi-organised groups, using weapons of offence or defence. These bandits are typically thought of as lawless marauders and outlaws who are desperate and lack a fixed place to live. They roam the mountains and forests in an attempt to evade being caught by the government (Abdulrasheed, 2021). Apart from its prevalence in urban and semi-urban centres, it also significantly flourishes in the rural areas or communities, which is marked by conspicuous deficiencies in governance (Tahir & Usman, 2021) or non-existent government structures and institutions. This is why it has in contemporary era enveloped many rural communities in Nigeria's Northwest region.

State Collapse

There is the need to explain the 'state' with a view to bringing to the fore the essence of 'state collapse' just as Plato, in his political philosophy and epistemology canvassed that there is the need to grasp the true meaning of justice if the notion of injustice is to be comprehended. The concept of state is, however, a contentious one, which is surrounded by many debates and arguments thus attesting to its ambiguous nature. It is thus imperative to align with a clear definition of State so as to be able to offer a succinct direction to the concept of State collapse. Fundamentally, Max Weber's definition, which conceives the state as a human association that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory (Weber, 1978) will suffice.

Stridently, a State is premised on three strength; security gap, capacity gap, and legitimacy gap. The most noble is the security gap as it is the key component on all political good stands. The goal of the State as regards its security is to stop cross-border invasions, infiltrations, and territorial

loss, remove threats and attacks on the national order and social structure, stop crime and any associated risks to domestic human security, and to provide citizens with the means to resolve their differences with the government and with other citizens without resorting to force or other physical means. The capacity gap measures the capability of the State to provide every essential public good such as infrastructures, basic amenities among others, while the legitimacy gap measures the citizen's trust in the state governmental institutions to provide these public goods as expected (Fund for Peace, 2017; Tyagi, 2012).

In extant literature, state collapse or failure has often been employed to capture the inability of the government to perform its statutory responsibility of providing security and welfare packages for its citizenry. The State is thus said to have failed if it cannot carry out the fundamental duties of Statehood. Essentially, a State collapses when its citizens are no longer receiving positive political goods from it due to internal strife. In the assessment of the public, such governments are said to have lost legitimacy and the very existence of the nation-state itself is questioned and seen as illegitimate (Caty, 2005).

State collapse is regarded as the inevitable consequence of escalated power struggle between many competitor actors which reveals or creates a lack of significant state capacities in the three main dimensions of statehood of monopoly of violence, rule-making and taxation for an extended period of six consecutive months. State collapse invariably occurs when a weak state is unable or unwilling to carry out its role as the supplier of public goods (Lambach, Johias & Bayer, 2015; Marshal, Monty & Cole, 2008). It is viewed as an uncommon and extreme stage of a continuum of state deterioration, which is often regarded as the complete disintegration of a sovereign regime (Milliken & Krause, 2002). Hence, the ultimate form of state decline is state collapse.

Various contending interpretations have been put forward by scholars to explain 'state collapse'. Zartman (1995) conceived it as the situation where the structure, authority, law and political order have fallen apart without any reconstitution. This basically implies the collapse of government and the maintenance of public authority institutions, which is considered to be the primary safeguard for the smooth operation of society as a whole. For Ulfeder (2014), state collapse happens when a sovereign state is unable to maintain public order in at least half of its area or in its capital city for long period of time. For instance, when an organised challenger, usually a rebel group successfully dominates a certain area, when lawlessness becomes prevalent

in an environment, or when both situations occur, a sovereign state is considered to have failed in maintaining public order in that area. Call (2008) also averred that state collapse refers to severe circumstances in which state institutions disintegrate rapidly, invariably amounting to total breakdown of a national state.

In these instances, sub-state or non-state bodies supply all services normally rendered by the state, and residents are hesitant about where to go to for these services. In a collapsed state, the institutional system is either totally or partially destroyed; both the democratic system of checks and balances and the rule of law are absent. The state is modeled by corrupted elites in accordance with their own special interests. Armed actors are dispersed, fractured, and privatised because they do not possess a monopoly on violence. A state's armed forces may be partially replaced by warlords, paramilitary groups, guerrillas, mercenaries, and foreign military advisors. Consequently, violence becomes privatised and for several people, their primary source of income. Armed groups struggle to establish sub-state entities and take control of specific geographic territories or regions (The African Studies Centre, 2007). Classical examples of collapsed state are the situations in Somalia from 1991, Sierra Leone (1998) and Liberia (1990) (Caty, 2005) as well as the typical instances of what obtains in Nigeria's Northwest region of Sokoto, Zamfara, Kaduna and Katsina states.

Theoretical Framework

Two mutually dependent and reinforcing theories namely greed and grievance theory, and failed state theory are adopted to explain the issues involved in this paper. Greed and grievance theory was developed by Collier and Hoeffler (2000) in an effort to explain the reasons behind the violent uprising that gave rise to civil wars. The proponents of this theory averred that the primary causes of the outbreak of armed rebellion are usually economic incentives (Doorn, 2013). Based to the greed and grievance theory, the conflict arises from resistance to injustice situation, discrimination, deprivation, and marginalisation as well as their concomitant effects. This suggests that perceived injustice is a necessary condition for conflict to erupt. This theory, in contrast to greed theory, relies on the assumption that conflict results from opportunity while grievance theory holds that conflict arises as a response to marginalisation. In tandem with the philosophy of grievance and greed, a group's desire to rebel against injustice comes from grievances, while greed

is thought of as emanating within the context of the pursuit of economic opportunity (Hoth & Mengal, 2016).

Grievances may habitually stem from political marginalisation, intergroup hostility, or a desire for retribution. Based on the premise of this notion, the theory implies that violent conflict, including but not limited to communal conflicts, religious conflicts, herder-farmer crises, insurgencies, and most critically, banditry that is currently consuming Nigeria's Northwest, arises when there is apparent injustice, discrimination, deprivation, and marginalisation (Okafor, Nwangele & Okoro, 2023). Though this theory may be tenable in certain circumstances, it cannot hold sway in all situations on the grounds that the kind of generalisation about civil wars that the proponents attempted to espouse in their work is somewhat illogical. This is basically so because the causes of conflicting crises, including civil wars, are often extremely complex social processes, which frequently heavily depend on the historical and regional contexts. As a result, it is critical to examine the causes of civil wars and other contentious situations in the light of their particular circumstances (Osewa, 2019). Furthermore, the individualistic tendencies of the theory are evident in its inability to explain how the collapse of government and its institutions repeatedly drove people to commit banditry.

However, the application of grievance theory and greed assumptions to this paper rests on its relevance in demonstrating the reasons behind banditry in Nigeria's Northwest. As the theory posits, the main driver of violent rebellion and civil wars is an economic motivation. This fundamental factor could therefore, not be swept under the carpet in the context of Nigeria's Northwest, where the main causes of banditry centre around government's inability to provide for the basic needs of its people and the political class's desire to amass wealth for themselves at the expense of the poor and the rich (Okafor *et al.*, 2023; Osewa, 2019). The incapacity of the impoverished group to survive has now made them easy targets for the terrorist group's incentives, as they are being bought over at a low cost to serve as fighters for the lethal gangs operating in the Northwest.

The second theory adopted to explain this paper is the failed state theory. The idea of the failed state emerged in the 1990s, as a number of African countries started to display signs of distress, weakness, failing, failure, collapsing and collapse. As the symptoms worsened, they developed into the extraordinary situation known as a "failed state". A number of scholars, including Gros (1996), Mazrui (1995), Widner (1995), and Helman and Ratner (1992–1993) have

advanced variety of perceptions regarding failed states. Osaghae (2010), Khomsky (2006), Reymaekers (2005), Anyanwu (2005), Reno (2002) and Zartmain (1995) are other scholars who have beamed their searchlight on this issue. They contended that states in Africa belong to a generic species and have consistently been ranked lowest in terms of performance.

This theory argues that a state should have the exclusive right to employ violence within its borders. In order to safeguard both the criminal and the conformist, it should be able to control internal violence, whether through military means or otherwise. The thesis went on to say that states are created on the basis of thrust, the defense of fundamental human rights, the capacity for group decision-making, the assurance of distributive justice, and the resolution of internal conflicts and hostility (Khomsky, 2006, as cited in Abdurashheed, 2021). But anytime the state's laws and policies, of which internal security is one, are not seen to be successful, the state collapses (Rosenje *et al.*, 2020; Okoro, 2018).

Hence, a state that has fractured social and political frameworks is considered to be failing (Anyanwu, 2005). It consists of institutional, social, political, and economic shortcomings and failures in all their manifestations. Having a central government that is so weak or ineffective that it has little practical control over most of its institutions, territory, lack of public utilities or services, rampant corruption and criminality, refugees and involuntary population movement, and sharp economic decline are just a few of the many distinguishing features that exemplifies a failing state (Socyberty, 2010, as cited in Abiodun *et al.*, 2020).

In accordance with the theory, failed states result from the breakdown of the political structures that uphold human rights, law and order, and other ideals. This process is typically sparked by violent and anarchic forms of internal conflict or disturbance. It is the collapse of state institutions, particularly the court and police, which leads to a breakdown in law and order, general anarchy, and paralysis of governance (Anyanwu, 2005). As a result, a failing state permits corruption to flourish while simultaneously suffering from declining fundamental human development indicators including high infant mortality and illiteracy rates, failing utility supply in all sectors, and aging infrastructure (Amaechi, 2017).

The failed state theory has been criticised for its propensity for oversimplification, as it ignores the differences in governance throughout states and groups together various governance issues from other nations (Woodward, 2017). Furthermore, it was criticised for its political use to

support military actions and the establishment of states modeled after Western democracies (Grimm *et al.*, 2016).

By applying the theory to this paper, it can be concluded that a failed state is unable to reduce internal conflict or act as a mediator because it is unable to create and carry out public policies that would enable it to offer its people efficient services. This is the alleged state of affairs in Nigeria, where there is no efficient or responsive government, no legal consequences for those who kill, maim, or destroy property and a society where people live in anarchy. This is the reason that banditry has spread throughout the nation and that criminals have been able to kill without hesitation, destroy without cause, and kidnap people without facing consequences.

The Dynamics Propelling the Emergence of Warlords in Nigeria's Northwest

The dynamics responsible for the emergent warlords in Nigeria's Northwest region are complex in nature. One fundamental factor is the existence of porous borders (Rufa'i, 2021; Ignatius, 2020) and the accompanying arms smuggling and proliferation (Yahaya & Bello, 2020). Apart from the legally recognised routes established by the Nigerian government, a lot of illegal routes abound in Nigerian borders. In Nigeria, there are over 1,000 illegal routes into the country, with the majority abounding in the Northwest alone. The existence of such routes accentuates the flourishing of smuggling of arms and ammunitions into the country (Usman, 2022) and when these arms and ammunitions get to the hands of non-state actors like the bandits, it creates a sense of insecurity to the Northwest region. This is the situation in the banditry-torn Sokoto, Zamfara, Kaduna and Katsina States that share borders with Niger Republic, where reckless and dastardly use of illegal arms has inflicted terrible effects of gargantuan magnitude on the rural communities. Furthermore, many of these bandit leaders and their subordinates have a good knowledge of the terrain, that is, the forest, highlands and wetlands that dotted the Northwest region since most of them are either natives of the region or brought up in these communities.

The prevalence of massive poverty and illiteracy among the preponderant youth population of the Northwest, as a result of the Almanjiri syndrome created an enabling environment capable of luring the youth into joining the bandits' fold. Hence, the desire of the poor youth to get out of poverty encouraged them to become ready recruits and tools in the hands of the emergent warlords for intensifying the crisis.

The quantum of monetary gains accruing to the bandits, especially the leaders; in terms of ransom-taking and rent-seeking is in no small measure a contributory factor escalating banditry in

the Northwest region. Scholars and agencies like Osasona (2023; 2021), Amina (2023), Muhammed (2021), Obi, Otohinoyi and Oboromeni (2022), Tahir and Usman (2021) and Voice of America (VOA) Africa (2024) canvassed that the proceeds of ransom-taking alone is so enormous and higher than what they could have legitimately acquired from their initial occupation. This consciousness to some extent, has brought out the greed inherent in the nature of these bandits, implying that the more kidnappings embarked upon, the more the chances of collecting more ransom and thus becoming richer. The huge amount of money being amassed from banditry with particular reference to ransom-taking, rent-seeking and proceeds from other levies has brought a lot of economic power, improved social status and recognition and influence to many of the bandit leaders to the extent that some were even turbaned with chieftaincy titles by traditional rulers, the Emirs. A classical example is the case of a notorious bandit warlord, Ado Aleiro, who was controversially turbaned as the Sarkin Fulanin Yandoto by the Yandoton Daji Emirate (Muaz, 2022) in Zamfara state.

Furthermore, the improved economic status acquired by the bandit leaders has enhanced their social status and standing in the society. This has brought about more recognition especially to the more ruthless and daring personalities among them. The various dastardly acts of banditry has instituted fear in the minds of the local dwellers to the extent that some are being forced to offer their female children as wives to bandit leaders with a view to pacifying them, currying favours and thus allaying the fear of being attacked (Abdullahi, 2022). An instance of such notorious bandit who was offered a girl-child for marriage is Abubakar Abdallah (Dogo Gide) in Zamfara state (Adebulu, 2023).

Perhaps a crucial factor propelling the evolution and growth of warlords in Nigeria's Northwest is the issue of state collapse and the attendant weakness of security agencies or even non-existent of such in the vast mountainous and forest lands that dotted Nigeria's Northwest. The presence of government or its agencies including the police and other security outfits need more to be desired. Even where there are, they are either insufficient in terms of numerical strength and equipment.

The Emergence, Trends and Exploits of Warlords in Bandit-torn Nigeria's Northwest

The crisis of banditry in Nigeria's Northwest has led to the creation of sphere of influence among the bandit leaders, which is reminiscent of the European scramble for the partitioning of

African territories among the contending great powers of Europe then. This situation is aptly described by Rufai (2021) in Table 1

Table 1: Operational Spheres of bandit Groups and Leaders

S/No.	Armed Group/Name of Bandit Leader	Area of Operations
1.	Abubakar Abdallah (Alias Dogo Gide)	Kaduna and Niger States
2.	Yellow Jan-Bros	Birnin Gwari Forest and Giwa Areas of Kaduna State
3.	Tsoho Manjagara	Giwa Local Government, Kaduna State
4.	Alhaji Bodere and Alhaji Beleri	Sabon Birni, Giwa LGA, Kaduna State
5.	Yellow Ashana	Sabon Garin Gyadam, Kaduna State
6.	Ali Kawaje, also called Ali Kachalla	Birni Gwari, Kaduna State and Kagara LGA, Niger State
7.	Alhaji Isiya, Buhari General and Gannaie	Kaduna –Abuja Highway, Kaduna
8.	Alhaji Ado Aleru	Yan-Kuzo in Chafe LGA as well as some parts of Kaduna and Zamfara states
9.	Lanke, Umar Bengo, Yahaya, Kabir	Dan Rumfa Village in Jibya LGA
10.	Awuwalun Daudawa	Safana, Dan-Musa and Batsari LGAs, Kastina State.
11.	Dangotte Bazamfare	Along Katsina and Zamfara borders.
12.	Alhaji Auta, Ardo Na-Shaware, Ardo Nashama and Alhaji Shingi	Birnin Magaji LG, Zamfara State
13.	Dankarami	Zurmi LGA, Zamfara
14.	Alhaji Shehu Rekep and Alhaji Halilu	Tsafe, Maru and Anka LGAs, Zamfara
15.	Manu D. O.	Birnin Gwari and Giwa Areas, Kaduna State
16.	Saleh Piya-Piya	Anchau, Kaduna State

Source: Adapted from Rufai, (2021)

Each of these bandit leaders has become Lord of Manor’s farm in their area of influence, controlling spaces and dishing out commands and order in those various neighbourhood including the road networks and the local markets apart from extorting taxes and levies from the local communities. This scenario is objectively attained by unleashing incessant and sporadic attacks on the people thereby causing untold mayhem and wantonly inflicting destruction of gargantuan magnitude on the people, especially the vulnerable population, the children, women, the aged and physically challenged. Instances of the deadly attacks carried out by these bandits and their warlords are illustrated in Table 2

Table 2: Trends of Bandits’ Attacks and Casualties Involved

S/No	Date of Occurrence	Bandits' Attacks	Location of Attacks	Statistics of Casualties
1.	September 25, 2022	Bandits attacked Jumu'at central mosque	Bukkuyum, Zamfara State	15
2.	July 25, 2023	Raid of community	Dan Gulla, Zamfara State	34
3.	February 18, 2024	Bandits invaded the community	Gindin Dutse Makyali village, Kaduna State	12
4.	February 17, 2024	Bandits raided the communities	Kwassam and Sabon Layi Kanmakama, Kaduna State	6
5.	October 8, 2023	Bandits attacked community	Uguwan Dankali, Zaira, Kaduna State	4
6.	January 12, 2024	Bandits attacked and burnt houses	Kukar Babangida Village, Katsina	9
7.	February 21, 2024	Bandits raided community	Faskari, Katsina State	6
8.	May 16, 2024	Bandits opened fire on residents	Karfi community, Kano State	7
9.	August 18, 2023	Bandits ambushed soldiers	Zungeru area, Kano	36
10	December 21, 2020	Bandits attacked community	Falgore village, Kano	3
11.	May 24, 2022	Bandits attacked a farm	Garkudi Katsina State	12
12.	February 18, 2024	Bandits attacked policemen	Police headquarters, Zamfara State	7
13.	December 26, 2023	Bandits attacked and killed residents	Kurya village, Sokoto State	12
14.	December 2023	Bandits attacked town	Duhuwa town, Sokoto State	6
15.	November 7, 2023	Bandits killed Islamic school pupils	Katsina State	13

Source: Authors' Compilation from Nigerian Dailies (2024)

Consequent upon the various exploits made by these ferocious bandit groups, those kidnapped were subsequently requested to pay ransom to secure their release. For instance, bandits demanded ₦40 trillion as ransom for the release of 16 residents abducted from Gonin Gora area

of Kaduna State (Atungwu, 2024). Also, bandits demanded N30m to release children and women abducted in Wanzamai village, Zamfara state (Tauna, 2023). Apart from the “ransom-taking”, sales made from rustled cattle, levies were imposed on communities in form of protection fees while taxes and rates were imposed on markets and vehicles plying the roads. A good example is the case of farming communities in Birnin Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna state, where bandits imposed ₦12 million levy on the communities (Shiklam, 2022). In these processes, bandit leaders and warlords were able to secure enormous funds to defray their voluptuous life style.

Table 3 portrays a list of ransom collected by the warlords.

Table 3: List of Bandits’ Exploits and Ransom/Levies Collected

S/No	Bandits’ Exploits	Ransom Paid (#)	Date
1.	Bandits abducted lecturer, Mary Nasiru Mohammed, Zamfara State College of Education.	2 million	December 15, 2023
2.	Bandits kidnapped village head and Imam, Tsafe LGA, Zamfara State	500,000	December 18, 2023
3.	Bandits kidnapped wife of village head of Gwombe, Kuje, Abuja	6 million	December 5, 2023
4.	Bandits abducted 19 victims in Kudiri village, Kaduna State	10 million	December 3, 2023
5.	Bandits kidnapped and killed 1 in Sabon Gaya, Kaduna State	3 million	January 1, 2023
6.	Bandits kidnapped and killed Alhaji Yakubu Bala, Director of works, Mariga, Niger State	8 million	September 5, 2023
7.	Bandits kidnapped Obadiah Ibrahim	3 million	November 13, 2022
8.	Bandits abducted Kankara school boys, Katsina State	30 million	February 4, 2021
9.	Bandits kidnapped a corp. member in Sokoto State	17.2 million	November 30, 2023
10.	Bandits kidnapped 120 pupils of Bethel Baptist school, Kaduna	250 million	November 9, 2023
11.	Bandits abducted and killed Mr. Akinluyi Oladipupo, Kaduna State	8 million	December 8, 2023
12.	Bandits abducted 156 pupils of Salihu Tanko Isamiyya school in Rafi, Niger State	20 million	July 1, 2021
13.	Bandits kidnapped the Emir of Bungudu, Zamafara State	20 million	October 19, 2021
14.	Bandits kidnapped 6 people in Bassa community, Shiroro	2 million	January 31, 2021
15.	Bandits kidnapped 28 persons in Batsari, Katsina state	2.5 million	July 25, 2021

16.	Bandits kidnapped the Village head and 35 others residents of Guga in Bakori Local Government Area of Kastina State	26 million	March 7, 2022
17.	Bandits kidnapped 85 people from Wanzamai Village in Zamfara State	1.7 million	April 10, 2023
18.	Armed bandits abducted 4 persons in Danbaza community in Maradun Local Government Area of Zamfara State	80 million	July 10, 2023
19.	Bandits kidnapped 16 people from Gonin Gora Area of Kaduna State	40 million	March 11, 2024
20.	Bandit abducted 287 pupils in Kuriga in Chikun Local Government area of Kaduna State	1 billion	March 12, 2024

Source: Authors' Compilation from Nigerian Dailies (2024)

State Collapse as Precursor of the Emergent Warlords

There is no gainsaying the fact that from the socio-political and economic realities and available indices of insecurity (Odalonu & Egbogu, 2023), the Nigerian state is fast becoming a collapsed state. The degree of rising insecurity, which is enveloping the nation, is profound in character and dimensions. From Boko Haram insurgency that is tormenting Nigeria's Northeast; to the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) crisis of the Southeast; to the kidnapping menace of the Southsouth geopolitical enclave and the agitation for Yoruba nation in the Southwest; the Herder-farmer onslaught of the Northcentral; and the banditry decimating the Northwest (Ezeala & Nzewi, 2022; Ngwoke & Akabike, 2022) the country could safely be said to be engulfed in political turmoil.

Looking at the various leaderships that have governed the nation since political independence in 1960, a critical examination of Nigeria's political travails reveals that the Nigerian political leadership has been dominated by the Hausa-Fulani oligarchy (Agbaenyi & Ibebunjo, 2022) often called northern cabal. This political arrangement has somewhat been instrumental in foisting Fulani hegemony on the country. Though the North is often regarded as being constituted by the Hausa-Fulani extraction, to the detriment of other ethnic-nationalities in the country, the fact remains that political power is actually wielded by the minority Fulani stock, thus paving the way for the establishment of Fulani hegemony. This presumption has placed the Fulani in strategically vantage positions in political, military, administrative appointments and the economy. It has constrained the federal government under Muhammadu Buhari administration to devise both Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) and Cattle Colony policies to pacify Fulani herdsman and resettle them in other parts of the country (Abodunrin, Oloye & Adesola, 2020), a ploy scholars argued

will alter the demography of the nation and give the Fulani the opportunity to easily capture political power during elections.

Furthermore, the weak character of the Nigerian leadership and its lack of political will to frontally confront and decimate pervasive security challenges, especially the prevalent and escalating banditry, which has become a terrible conflagration consuming the Northwest explicitly portends its collapsing nature as a state. The weakness of the Nigerian leadership, in responding promptly and sharply to the incessant bandit attacks, accounts for its belated and poor response to banditry thereby giving the bandits much impudence and time to wreck havoc on the rural communities of the northwest (Rosenje & Adeniyi, 2021), such as Zurni, Maru and Tsafe local government areas in Zamfara State; Mugaba, Nasarawan Hayin Doka, Dokan Yuna, Tunburktu Hayin Dabino, Doka and Hayin Teacher in Giwa local government area in Kaduna State and Jibia, Batsari, Danmusa, Kankara, Faskari, Sabuwa, Dandume and Safana local governments areas in Katsina State.

More significant is the fact that state collapse becomes more visible and pronounced on account of the weakness of the security agencies, particularly the Nigeria police force in discharging its duties effectively and efficiently. The officials of the security agencies lack the adequate weapons and sophisticated equipment required to confront the bandits head-on apart from the fact that they were not well motivated to dislodge the bandits. In this regard, the response of security agencies to bandits' onslaught has always been slow, uncoordinated and consequently indecisive (Rosenje & Peju-Rosenje, 2022).

What is more, corruption remains a stumbling block in swiftly bringing the bandits to their knees. Corruption no doubt has become a cankerworm hindering the success of policy implementation in Nigeria. It has become an albatross hindering the implementation of government policies in combating banditry. When funds are even eventually released by the government to purchase arms, ammunitions and other equipment needed by the security agencies, they end up going into individual pockets. There are evidences to suggest that even when ransoms are released by government or its agent to secure the freedom of kidnapping victims, not all such monies are given to the bandits. There are usually discrepancies between what is offered by the government and what is released to the bandits (Sobowale, 2024).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper examined the emergence of warlords in banditry torn Nigeria's Northwest region. It equally examined the dynamics propelling the emergence of warlords in Nigeria's Northwest region, which are considered to be complex in nature. These factors include the existence of porous borders, arms smuggling and proliferation, prevalence of massive poverty, illiteracy and the monetary gains accruing to the bandits from kidnapping. The study observed that when the warlords noticed the huge profits accruing from 'ransom taking' and 'rent-seeking', banditry, which started as a justice-seeking phenomenon was transformed into loot-seeking practice.

Furthermore, the paper revealed that this situation was initiated, among others, by state collapse and aggravated by the inadequacies of the security agencies. It canvassed that the several efforts made by governments at various levels to frontally confront the scourge were belated, uncoordinated, inadequate and consequently ineffective. The paper concluded that if the government fails to take a decisive measure, armed banditry in the region will remain prolonged and intractable, while the warlords will continue to grow fat from the proceeds of "ransom-taking", "rent-seeking" and other criminalities thus paving way for the emergence of warlords, who now command respect, status and influence in the region.

In order to salvage the situation, the study recommended that:

- i. The Nigerian state should wield the strong political will in policy formulation and implementation in relation to Northwest banditry with a view to confronting the scourge head-on
- ii. The government should deal decisively with the warlords in accordance with the law to serve as deterrent to others.
- iii. The security personnel should be well equipped with sophisticated weapons and communication equipment, while they should also be adequately motivated to successfully prosecute the war.
- iv. Local security groups such as the vigilante should be incorporated into government security arrangement so that their knowledge of the terrain and other information could profit government forces.

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