

## **Military-Civilian Relationship in Fight against Armed Banditry in North-West, Nigeria**

**OGYE Danlami Okolo, Ph.D**

Department of Criminology & Security Studies, Nile University of Nigeria, Abuja

E-mail: [danlami.ogye@nileuniversity.edu.ng](mailto:danlami.ogye@nileuniversity.edu.ng), Phone No: 07032539369

**Smah Deborah Hembafan, Ph.D**

Department of Criminology & Security Studies, Nile University of Nigeria, Abuja

E-mail: [deborah.smah@nileuniversity.edu.ng](mailto:deborah.smah@nileuniversity.edu.ng), Phone No: 08068825658

### **Abstract**

*Insecurity has worsened in North-West Nigeria, due to the activities of armed banditry, necessitating the deployments and operations of the military. The banditry has affects individuals, groups and the society in general. It leads to wanton destruction of lives and property, social dislocation and also necessitates government diversion of its resources that are meant for development to the fight armed bandits. The role play by civilians in fight against armed bandits cannot be overemphasized, as civilians' cooperation are needed in the area of providing useful information and identification of bandits as well as the formation of local vigilante groups. The cooperation between the civilians and the military has always been one important part of societal development as these have always worked together to ensure peace and security in the society. The paper attempted to examines the importance of the military and the civilian working together to ensure peace in North-Western Nigeria especially during the ongoing war against banditry. The paper utilized mainly secondary sources of information through the review of relevant literatures particularly academic peer review. The paper revealed that the civilian population has played an important role in raising its voice to ensure the fight against banditry is won. Therefore, the paper recommends that the relationship between the civilians and the military should be strengthened through the provision of certain incentives to the civilians who provide useful security information on how to identify the bandits. In addition, the government should educate both the civilians and the military on their respective roles to fight banditry in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Military, Civilian, Banditry, Fight, Relationship, North-West

### **Introduction**

Over the years, Nigeria has been overwhelmed by a number of security issues, posing a variety of threats to its existence (Oduwole, 2016). The armed bandits wreaking disgusting havoc in the North-West region, Boko-Haram in North-East, Niger-Delta militancy, oil bunkering in South-South, ritual killing and activities of IPOB agitators in South-East, South-West down to armed robbery/kidnapping and herders-farmers clashes, ethno-religious crises and cattle rustling in North Central are the recent criminal activities that have continued to threaten the corporate existence of Nigeria (Allan, 2024). The Nigerian government response to these threats has been mainly through the deployment of the military force to restore law and order and to maintain peace (Ibrahim, 2023). Although number of conflicts arising from religious-based disputes has been witnessed in some parts of the country, the most unfortunate recent experience of the people of Nigeria are the activities of the armed bandits and Boko Haram crises (Aina, Ojo & Oyewole, 2023 and Allan, 2024).

Banditry has become the worst threat to security in the history of Northwest Nigeria in recent times (Aina, *et al* 2023). This have started herders-farmers crisis, it has transformed into a multidimensional conflict that feature cattle rustling and related crimes such as thefts and armed robbery, kidnappings for ransom, ethno-communal clashes, illegal gold mining, assaults, and sexual violence (Ogye and Takwa, 2020). Of all the security challenges, the activities of the

armed bandits in the North Western Nigeria are believed to be the deadliest and challenging to the Nigerian Military. The group uses various methods such as killing/assassination of key individuals, kidnapping of students/pupils for ransoms, attacks on security bases and convoys, places of worship and communities, community/road attacks, and persistent kidnapping of innocent citizens who are mostly school pupils/students from different location. The bandits also collect taxes from rural communities to further carry out their nefarious attacks. Importantly to note, armed bandits select its targets which is mostly rural areas but depends on local support and collaboration to carry out such attacks (Obasanjo, 2023 & Allan, 2014)

Military engagement with the civilian populace started recently in Zamfara State where civilians or locals were told to form vigilante group in their rural communities in order to fight armed bandits. The civilian vigilante groups were meant to work closely with security operatives as informants to identify various banditry groups operating in their respective community with a mandate to quell the banditry activities. Though, there were series of clashes between bandits and vigilante group escalated into death from both side in 2022 (Mafara, 2023). Ogye et al (2020) argued that aside the armed banditry conflicts are opportunistic criminal elements and other related armed groups. However, it is pertinent to note that what different armed bandits from terrorist groups is that unlike the latter, who are mostly driven by political ideology, the actions, and activities of the former on the other hand are mostly motivated by economic opportunism. It can be said that Zamfara State remains the main hideout of the group, the nefarious activities of armed bandits across the region, are equally alarming in Katsina, Sokoto Kebbi and Kaduna states, thereby bearing the hallmarks of an axis of disruption. The development has a devastating impact on the lives and livelihoods of tens of millions of people who inhabit the region (Aina *et al* 2023 & Allan, 2024).

In ensuring that the armed bandits were brought under permanent control, a joint military task force code named Operation Hadarin Daji (OPHD) was established in 2018 to conduct large scale military operations in Zamfara and Kastina states where armed bandits had strong bases. No doubt, the armed bandits later spread to other neighboring states of Kaduna, Kebbi, Sokoto and Niger states. This was followed by raging havoc on communities and towns along their way. In North-West Nigeria, there seems to be disconnection between local populace and military deployment in the area. This is because military presence has not been witnessed before the emergence of armed banditry in North-West. It is very common to see soldiers operating in an unfamiliar terrain while it is uncommon to see the civilians coming closer to the military personnel. This to a great deal hampered the success of military operations in the area (Ogye et al 2020).

In most cases where military operations were witnessed before the advent of banditry activities, the Nigerian citizens have long endured a culture of intimidation by security forces. The ordinary Nigerian sees security agents as potential violators of their right rather than safeguarding their security. The reality of state security for ordinary citizens then becomes the perception of insecurity. This negates the principle of working together to defeat the common enemy (Ibrahim, 2023). Badeh (2015) espoused that military has been having fracas with the civilian while carrying out its counter-insurgency duties. He opined that robust civil military collaboration to win the war against terrorists that are concealed among the populace is a necessity. Civilian- Military cooperation no doubt is a necessity in combating insurgency in Nigeria.

The fight against terrorism will not be won except security operatives get the support of Nigerians (Allan, 2024). Consequently, a huge question arises from the researcher's mind: what if the perceived military civilian relationship in other area of operation is contrary to the people's perception of the military in North-West which has not witnessed military presence before the advent of banditry? This is a poser that calls for empirical answers. There is therefore the need to investigate whether the military deployment in North-west was done in collaboration with the local populace before the area was overrun by insurgents.

Similarly, there seems to be the need for military to engage local populace that will provide direction, information and support in addition to military tactics. Hypothetically, if military engage the local populace appropriately in planning its operations, it is expected that they will succeed in defeating the armed bandits. As the armed bandits' violent attack on North-West region persist, can we say that the military from the onset were not able to engage the locals in its planning to defend the area before the attack in recent times? If the military engaged the local populace in their operations, what areas were left out? These are some of the lingering issues this study will like to clarify theoretically. It is against this background that the paper centers on military-civilian relationship in the fight against armed banditry in North-West, Nigeria.

### **Conceptual Review**

The following concepts were conceptualized

#### **The Military**

The military can be described as a distinct social organisation within state (DHN, 2024), which is also empowered by the state to exert force in deterring threats to the sovereignty and survival of the state. The military therefore constitutes a significant part of the state's coercive apparatus and is primarily concerned with protecting the territorial integrity of the state, from external aggression. This has mostly been the conventional role of the military as it relates to security and defense, as enshrined in states' constitutions. However, on certain occasions, the military can and has been deployed internally, to address insurrections particularly where there has been a complete breakdown of law and order. While the military's response to external aggression remains its primary constitutional role, its participation in internal security can be considered as a secondary responsibility. Most state constitutions also make provisions for this exception (Adejoh, 2017 & Aina, et al, 2023).

A military generally consists of an army, navy, air force, and in certain countries, the marines and coast guard. The military are forces authorized to use deadly forces and weapon to support the interest of the state and its entire citizens. The military's primary role is to defend the state and its citizens and to engage in war with other states. The military is an organized body primarily tasked with preparing for and conducting war (Oduwole, 2016; Adesola, 2018 & Babatula, 2021).

The military, also known as the armed forces, is authorized to use deadly force and weapons to support the interests of the state and its citizens. The primary responsibilities of the military include the defense of the state and its citizens and the prosecution of war against other states (Bintube, 2021; Adekanye & Williams, 2020 & Oduwole, 2022).

#### **Armed banditry**

Banditry as a form of organised crime has existed across the world over time. It is pertinent to also note that the motives of armed bandits vary from context to context, over given periods of time and space (Defence Headquarters of Nigeria, 2024). There are various types of armed banditry ranging from social, rural-urban frontier, and countryside banditry (Kwaji, 2016). The divergent forms of armed banditry could be broadly categorised as banditsism. Furthermore, armed banditry is known to be mostly triggered by factors such as social inequalities, relative deprivation and local grievances (Kwache, 2021). Armed bandits can be considered as organised criminal gangs with no clear political, and ideological leanings, but rather in search of economic opportunity operating within Nigeria's Northwest region (Aina, 2023). Contemporary armed banditry in Nigeria however has its origins in Nigeria's farmer-herder crisis (Ibrahim, 2023). Its manifestation has taken on several forms over the years such as armed robbery, theft, brigandage, and kidnappings for ransom, illegal gold mining, and sexual violence amongst others (DHN, 2024). They therefore constitute one of many threats that necessitate the military's foray into internal security operations.

### **Concept of Civilian**

Civilians are people that are not member of the police or armed forces that are meant to be protected by the military. They are those who are not engaged in combat against the state. In general, a civilian is a person who is not a member of the military or of a police or fire-fighting force (Kwaji, 2016). In military and law enforcement slangs, the term “civies” or “civvies” are often used to refer to civilian population or civilian clothing. Under the laws of war (also known as international humanitarian law), a civilian is one not being a member of the armed services and does not take a direct part of conflicts in times of armed conflict. Similarly, the term civilian is slightly different from a non-combatant under the laws of war, because some non-combatants are not civilians (Ibrahim, 2023).

In modern conflicts, the position of civilians in war remains complex and problematic. Several issues contribute to this complexity, including the fact that many modern wars are essentially civil wars, making it challenging to apply the laws of war and maintain the distinction between combatants and civilians. Additionally, guerilla warfare and terrorism often involve combatants disguising themselves as civilians. There is also a growing focus on "effects-based war," which involves undermining the enemy regime's sources of power, sometimes targeting seemingly civilian objects such as electrical power stations. Lastly, the use of "lawfare" refers to attempts to discredit the enemy by making its forces appear to violate the laws of war (Fluri, 2003 & Baaraya 2013).

As per this paper, a civilian is defined as a person who is not a member of the military, police, or firefighting force. This definition sets apart individuals whose responsibilities involve risking their lives to protect the general public from dangerous situations such as terrorism, riots, conflagrations, or wars.

### **Military- Civilian Relationship**

This is cooperation between the military and the civilians in communication and contact for building cooperation and support to realize the objective of restoring law and order for peace and security to be sustained. This requires commitment and action between the military and civilian (Takwa, 2016 & Obasanjo, 2023). The Nigerian state's deployment of the military to quell any threat through its involvement in several internal military operations has resulted in partial successes due to non-involvement of civilian in military operations. Yet, their involvements in internal security have also been plagued with some challenges thereby impeding its counterbanditism offensive efficiently and effectively in the Northwest (Ogye et al, 2020 & Aina et al 2023).

Allan (2014) noted the challenges confronting military operation in internal security in Nigeria include lack of cordial relationship between the military and the members of public in the host communities, and lack for local vigilantes operating across the region to mention a few. To Allan (2024) waging a more effective war against armed banditry would require a recalibration of the military's partnership with members of the public. Doing so requires a prioritisation of the human security and people-centric dimensions to its approach. This is crucial to advancing the operational successes of its counter-banditism responses in the troubled region.

### **Theoretical framework**

The paper adopted structural functionalism theory. Structural functionalism is one of the theories of sociology that explains the functions of a part of a social system in the development of the system as a whole (Igbo, 2013). Structural functionalism views society as an organic whole, where each part works together to maintain order. This is similar to how the human body functions, with each part working together for the well-being of the body as a whole. The key concepts in functionalism are structure and function (Haralambos, Holborn and Heald, 2008). To the functionalist therefore, behaviour in society is structured. In other words, relationships between members of society are organized in terms of roles (Ibrahim, 2023). The structure can

be understood as the collective behaviour governed by social norms and relationships (Igbo, 2013).

Society can be seen as a system, similar to an organ in the body. To understand the role of an organ, like the liver, we need to understand its connections to other organs and how it helps maintain the body. Similarly, to understand any part of society, we should look at its connections to other parts and how it contributes to the overall functioning of society. Just as an organism needs certain basic needs to survive, society also needs certain basic needs to continue existing. That a structure exists presupposes it continues to function and therefore relevance to the existence and survival of the whole system.

Considering the study therefore, the relevance of structural functionalism theory to this paper cannot be underestimated. The civilian-military cooperation on the security is a strategy towards defeating armed banditry activities in Nigeria through effective synergy between civilian and security agencies so as to weaken and reduce insurgents' activities in the society. An adage says: "security is every man's business" so therefore, since security is very important to humans, the government effort to ensure a crime free society is paramount in its agenda. Hence, civilians cooperating with security operatives to defeat terrorists like armed bandits in North-West will go a long way in weakening banditry activities in Nigeria.

### **History of Civil-Military Relations in Nigeria**

Civil-military relation is not new in Nigeria society. Relations between civil society and the military have been shaped by the establishment of the West African frontier forces, initially formed as the British army for conquest and pacification (Takwa 2016, Ogye et al 2020). Since its establishment, the relationship between civil society and the military has been marked by distrust. The adversarial mentality between civilians and the military has prevented a constructive interaction that could contribute to peacebuilding and national unity. Soldiers often refer to civilians as "bloody," indicating their disdain for the civilian population. This attitude persists because soldiers perceive all civilians as inexperienced in matters of defense. Unaware to the military, Takwa (2016:3) maintain that with the dominance of science and technology, civilians now enjoy a monopoly in the field of defense studies.

This contempt may explain the extreme brutality against civilians by the military. It is common to see cases of impunity against ordinary, often innocent Nigerians, including women and children, under the pretext of maintaining order in a region prone to violence. This is often referred to as collateral damage in the bureaucratic language of the military, but it's really a euphemism for the harm caused to innocent people (Baraya, 2013). Fluri (2003) argues that the sovereignty of the community, nation, and the state only makes sense if it is derived from one genuine sovereignty: the sovereignty of the human being in civil society.

The tension between parties can be explained by the colonial administration, which viewed the military as a powerful tool for suppressing opposition to the British Empire's interests. In order to exert complete control, the colonial government created a powerful entity that has proven difficult to control even after the departure of its creators. Note that "it was not the best troops who were sent to the west coast of Africa for these were required for military campaigns in Europe; and consequently, it was not uncommon to find convicts and other undesirable human dregs, sent to serve in West Africa (Takwa, 2016). The actions of these individuals introduced a culture of impunity, brutality, and a complete disregard for human rights. This situation was made worse by the large number of people who drank excessively. It was very common to find several intoxicated white soldiers lying in the streets in the morning (Allan, 2024).

Lee (1969) argued that the military as a creation of colonialism focused primarily on safeguarding sources of raw materials, markets, and the economic interests of the empire. Lee further argued against the idea that internal security was a primary reason for establishing the colonial military. He contended that although there were African personnel in the armies, in terms of missions, orientation, interests, training, weapons, and commitment, these armies functioned more as imperial forces deployed in Africa. Regarding the empire's responsibility for creating

conflict between the military and civil society, it was argued that the empire used violence to maintain its dominance, control the colony's resources, turn peasants into proletarians to ensure an adequate labor force for its projects, and suppress a hostile population (Ake, 1992). These goals were achieved through the use of a coercive army. The situation was exacerbated by the soldiers' belief in their racial superiority as citizens of Great Britain (David, 2018). The lasting impact of the behaviour exhibited by these elements on the post-colonial army explains the extremism seen in contemporary soldiers.

### **Nature of Military-Civil Relationship in Fight against Armed Banditry**

In present-day Nigeria, the nature of civil-military relations has not changed significantly from the colonial era. According to Adekanye & Williams (2020), the security establishment has long been marked by a tension between two different conceptions of national security.

Some years ago, the Nigerian Army Headquarters held an interactive session under its civil-military Affairs Department at the Army Headquarters. The Nigeria Army came up with an idea to have a healthy warm relation with the civilians (Badeh, 2015). It was agreed that there was no better way than for the civilians to give total cooperation to the Army in keeping this country united and providing security, especially at this time that insecurity is all over and there is palpable fear everywhere. Since the nature of modern warfare has changed, public support for military operation has also become so important and come to determine significantly the success of military operations. This is because the elements waging war against the state are almost nebulous, difficult, visible within the population and operate using guerrilla war tactics (hit and run) (Badeh, 2015 & Allan, 2024).

According to Kwaji (2016) both the civil society and the military are interdependent in many significant ways. He cited Section 217 of the Nigerian constitution (2010) Revised tasked the Nigerian Army to suppress insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities to restore order. To this effect, the then Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen. O.A. Ihejirika directed the establishment and immediate take off of the Department of Civil Military Affairs at Army Headquarters in order to bridge the existing gap between the Nigerian Army and the civil populace (Ibrahim, 2018).

The objective of the Department was to underscore the fundamentality of Civil-military Affairs as a strategic national institution. To introduce and transmit the core elements of effective civil-military relations in areas of human rights, rule of law, Negotiations, Liaison and conflict resolution, the Nigerian Army created a civil military department as an agent, protector and defender of the community and national interest through proactive civil-military relations. The overall objective of the department is to enhance the credibility and integrity of the Nigerian Army as a strategic conflict mediator and resolution stakeholder as well as promote very cordial civil-military relations (Kwache, 2021).

Opportunities for building a strong relationship between civil society and the military are essential in an emerging democracy. This relationship has the potential to create trust and confidence between the parties, effectively reducing sources of conflict. In a traditional democracy in the post-modern phase of human civilization, the military's role is clearly defined, and the institution is subordinate to civil authority. As a result, conflicts between the two parties are rare. In this context, it is common to see the military actively participating in roles that aim to enhance the welfare and safety of the civilian population (Ayuba, 2015).

The wide range of threats to law, order, and public safety in Nigeria requires an immediate and thorough review of the fundamental concepts and operational assumptions at the core of our national security system. When necessary, there should be a redesign to enhance institutional capabilities in order to effectively address the current threats (Ayuba, 2015 & Fayemi, 2018). The military, although an instrument of war, could also become an important instrument of diplomacy. This is relevant in the sense that it is shaped by the understanding that only a paradigm shift from a security policy anchored on force to one driven by democracy can bring about the needed change (Ochoche, 2001 & Ayuba, 2015).

This approach has deep roots in the history of civil-military relations in many countries with a strong military tradition (Ayuba, 2015 & David, 2018). Implementing this strategy in Nigeria's civil-military relations could help ease existing tensions and distrust that have characterized relations between these groups. Simply relying on standard military operations will not effectively address the issue of armed bandits (Ayuba, 2015 & Obasanjo, 2023:23). For instance, in September 2010, during the flood disaster in Sokoto, the Chief of Army Staff instructed the construction of a bridge over the Rima River, demonstrating the military's involvement in civilian matters (Ayuba, 2015 & Olukolade, 2018).

In a related development, various groups within civil society such as academic institutions, think tanks, human rights NGOs, and policy-focused NGOs can actively work to influence decisions and policies related to the security sector, including civil-military relations (Fluri, 2003 & Ayuba, 2015). By improving the dialogue between civil society and the military, it is possible to break the isolationist stance of the armed forces and establish a professional exchange process between civil society, elected officials, and the military high command, as was the case in democratized Latin America (Fluri, 2003). It is important to establish positive civil-military relationships to build trust and cooperation among conflicting parties. The long-standing negative perceptions of civilians and the military should be condemned, and those who promote such attitudes should face penalties. It is crucial for military personnel to understand that they are ultimately civilians themselves, having been civilians before enlisting and after retirement. Instilling this mindset will help them maintain a more respectful relationship with the civilian population (Ayuba 2015 & Babaginda, 2018).

The campaign against the armed bandits failed not because the military lacked the troops and logistics to sustainably engage the groups; it failed because the security forces didn't fight a winnable and moral war. This means winning the confidence of the local populace, a strategy employed by victorious armies around the world (Gowon, 2019). Many scholars in the field of terrorism studies agree with this position, emphasizing that sustainable strategies in the war against insurgents must seek to understand the entire psyche and environmental orientation of the insurgents (Omoumbi, 2018). Understanding their disposition, habits, source of support including weapons funding and mercenaries, ideology and ultimate goals, capabilities, membership and recruitment strategies, mode of operation, leadership, motivations, affiliations, and more is crucial (Fayemi, 2018). However, the specialized nature of the military may create initial challenges unless the military undergoes a re-orientation to adapt the institutions to the way of life in civil society.

. Adedeji & Zabedi (2023) posited that the success the Nigerian military is recording in Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna and Sokoto States is because of cooperation received from the populace. Operating under a vigilante, the youths have constituted themselves into what they call "Community Vigilante Group" (CVG). The various groups furnish the military with reliable intelligence information to identify the insurgents and their hideouts, attacking their hideouts and making arrests (Bintube, 2019).

According to Fayemi (2018:27), implementing a strategy to decentralize law enforcement and security administration is essential for protecting the system from political influence. He emphasized the emergence of neighbourhood vigilante groups, known as the CVG, which have been effective in rooting out insurgents from their communities with support from peace-keeping forces, similar to the case of the Sierra-Leone war (Adesola, 2018). The military has recognized the value of local intelligence in dealing with hidden insurgent forces within civilian populations and has enlisted the support of neighbourhood vigilantes. This highlights the multi-dimensional approach to managing violent extremism, which values intelligence alongside kinetic approaches (Ayuba, 2015 & Kwaje, 2021).

### **Importance of Public Support in the Fight against Armed Bandit**

According to U.S Army counter-insurgency field manual, winning the hearts and minds of the people is the desired end-state of counter-insurgency and it is very important for the success of

any counter-insurgency operations especially the military operation (David, 2018). “Hearts” means persuading people that their best interest are served by the success of a counter-insurgency, while “minds” means convincing the public that the forces of government can protect them and that resisting them will be pointless (David, 2018). Olukolade (2018) identified the importance of public support for military operations or otherwise civilian-military cooperation to include:

- i. It gives the military personnel the needed morale and confidence to function. Public support of the military operation always gives the military personnel the needed morale to perform their operation to the best of their abilities.
- ii. It gives the troops the opportunity to win hearts and minds in the case of counter-insurgency: Again, another importance of public support for counter-insurgency is the leverage that it gives the military personnel to win the hearts and minds of the people to their side. It allows the troops to easily understand the areas. A military operation that is enjoying popular support will get more information that will help them to be able to understand their environment of operation very well.
- iii. It also promotes the success of such military operations: Another major significance of public support of military operations is that it often promotes the success of the operation. This is a cumulative effect at all the significant points noted earlier.

It is a fact that the civilian populations are often the foremost victims of conflicts situations. Being that the case, the civilians are also very important in finding a lasting solution to any crisis situation especially banditry. Civilians can promote peaceful development through various initiatives and supports, but they can also exacerbate conflicts as instigators, congealers or abetting the violence. The role of the civilians is therefore important before, during, and after the conflict, with the aim of contributing positively to policies to improve the situation (Ibrahim, 2023).

Banditry is often believed to rely on stealth to keep its insurgency alive in the face of government offensives. Over the years, the ability of the groups to blend into local communities, or to conceal themselves in the vast terrains of the region, has aided their campaign of violence (Olukolade, 2018). In the same vein, Badeh (2015) said a robust civil military collaboration to win the war against terrorism that is concealed amongst the populace was necessary (Petinrin, 2022).

The combined joint security forces including Nigerian Army, Air Force and police have been working together as a Joint Task Force to fight the armed bandits for few years now. The local vigilante groups were discovered by the security operatives to be helpful in fight against armed bandits and other insurgents; this is because military alone cannot defeat bandits in North-West of Nigeria. The increasing role civilians play in fighting the sect range from guiding the military, identifying the insurgents and defending their local communities (Kwache, 2021). Bintube (2019: 32) quoted one of the vigilante members saying “the military are government troops sent to secure our communities; they are watching and listening to us while we feed them with useful information. We are giving them useful information on anything they don't understand because we are the sons of the soil,” “We knew bandits and their family members and their activities are just become too much. We started fishing them out from our communities. We will search house to house and from community to community. In northwestern Nigeria, the vigilante patrols communities with local weapons such as then guns, machetes and even bows and arrows (Kwaji, 2016).

### **Importance of Cooperation between the Military and Civilian in the Fight against Armed Banditry**

There is no doubt that the civilians and the military have come into an understanding that a peaceful society can only be built by coming together of the two parties and that is why it becomes important to ensure that steps must be taken to build up a better cooperation among them (Takwa, 2016 & Ogye et al 2020). The military is an institution with a large number of



experts in strategic studies. It is important to regularly engage with civilians to bridge gaps and break down any walls of suspicion. One important way to promote this is to ensure that public opinion plays a role in evaluating the activities of the military. This allows the military to identify and address any weaknesses or loopholes.

Also, the important of workable armed forces radio that is put in place in order to inform the military to gather intelligence, information and to rub mind with the public as well as get suggestions from the people who could help fast-track the progress of the military in fighting banditry and any other internal threat.

The importance of strengthening joint task force that is military-civilian joint task force (MCJTF) is also a very important way of ensuring a better civil-military cooperation. When military relates with other groups in the society such as the vigilante, NGOs and other security operatives it will certainly enhance a faster and better way to curb the banditry in the North-East Nigeria. More informants can be contracted with the civilians who will feed the military with firsthand information about the groups so as to penetrate the suspected hotspot areas of attack without the insurgents knowing. When trusted civilians are integrated into the joint military operations, it would go a long way in flushing out Boko Haram in their hide out with intelligent information where about the insurgents' operation. Credible intelligence provides by these civilians to the military will help in identifying them thereby nailing their works to the bud, since most of the people knows their hide out.

### **Challenges Associated with Military-Civilian Relationship in Fighting Armed Banditry in Northwest Nigeria**

The effort of military to get rid of armed banditry in Northwest, Nigeria through civilian-military cooperation have encountered several challenges. Some of these challenges include lack of government support, lack of trust between the military and the public, inadequate funding, limited manpower, the insufficiency of state-of-the-art weaponry, equipment deficiency and technology, and tactical strategies.

Other challenges include allegations of corruption, human rights abuses, and the negative effects of the military's operations on some affected local communities, all of which have affected its legitimacy in waging unconventional warfare against armed bandits in the region (Aina et al 2023). The fallout of some of this has been an affront on the state's monopoly over the use of force, which has further emboldened armed bandits in Nigeria's Northwest. This has become evident in the atrocious activities of these groups across local communities. As a result of these challenges, many people have been killed, with over 1,000,000 displaced in recent times (Ayitogo, 2024). He noted that some troops deployed to the affected states have also had to pay the ultimate price. An example of this was when 4 troops lost their lives during a fierce battle with armed bandits in April 2020, at Zurmi, in Zamfara state (Defence Headquarters Nigeria, 2024).

Another challenge is the unregulated activities of local vigilante groups including revenge killings which have tended to exacerbate, rather than ameliorate tensions in parts of the region. Other issues that stand in the way of the military-civilian's ability to effectively prosecute the war against armed bandits has been the decision of some sub-national entities in the region to negotiate with armed bandits and their handlers. This has led in some cases to concessions including offers of amnesty by Zamfara and Katsina states. Given that this approach is not properly coordinated, with some sub-national entities such as Kaduna state adopting a non-negotiation/non-amnesty policy, armed bandits could potentially exploit these gaps by moving into other areas to perpetuate their crimes, having initially benefitted from these concessions in their previous areas of operation (Ibrahim, 2018).

Other challenges are manifested in the form of political interference by both the federal government as well as the sub-national state governments. Pressured by citizens who are concerned about their safety, politicians are often keen to show that they are performing, thereby transferring pressure on the military to produce results, sometimes within the shortest possible

time (Aina, et al 2023). Often, this is done without necessarily considering or having a good understanding of the operational dynamics of prosecuting unconventional warfare. There have also been concerns about the degree of collateral damage associated with military-led against armed bandits, particularly related to airstrikes after getting information from the public. Such interdiction missions raise concerns over damages to properties, as indicated by the Defence Headquarters Nigeria and in some instances civilian casualties, which the air components have attempted to avert in its missions ((DHN, 2024). This has proven to be quite difficult, considering the factor of manoeuvrability associated with the use of motorcycles for mobility by armed bandits across the region.

Given the rugged terrain that characterises the region, rather than the overreliance on airstrikes, military-civilian synergy is better suited to securing liberated spaces from armed bandits, however issues associated with limited manpower pose a severe challenge in this regard as well.

### **Methodology**

The study adopts an exploratory research design. It draws on secondary sources of information obtained through academic peer reviewed journal articles, books, internets, official documented reports, and reputable newspapers both local and international news sources, including official press releases by the Nigerian military on its major joint operation against armed banditry, which is the Joint Task Force Operation Hadarin Daji (OPHD) in Northwest Nigeria. The choice of Northwest Nigeria is informed by the fact that across the entire length and breadth of the Nigerian State, no other region has recorded incidents of attacks by armed bandits, and deaths resulting from armed banditry than the Northwest region. Other sources of data utilised is from the Council on Foreign Relation's Nigerian Security Tracker (NST) dataset. The scope of the research covers the period from 2020 to 2024. The study choice to focus on this military-civilian relationship in internal security operations is informed by the significant impact of the cooperation committed to it by both military and civilian, thereby qualifying it as major joint partnership in the region. In addition, the study utilises secondary data sources research techniques relevant to the research's objective, which include the thematic information presentation. This is given its significance towards helping to identify patterns of information relevant and its subsequent reporting.

### **Discussion**

Nigeria's quest for national growth and development since independence has been hindered by socio-political and economic problems which have led to series of internal conflicts and in recent times have taken the part of terrorism. These challenges have regularly punctuated Nigeria's aspiration to nationhood by deep-seated insecurity (Kwaji, 2019). In recent time, series of challenges such as kidnapping, armed banditry, herders-farmers clash, socio-political agitators, ritual killings, political assassination, and ethno-religious crises have recently threatened life and peaceful coexistence in the country. The recently most destructive and deadliest ever witnessed is the armed banditry crisis which has taken the part of terrorism and continues to pose a distinct threat to the peace and security of the nation. Many lives have been lost and properties worth billions of naira destroyed. An estimated property worth \$5.9 Billion with an estimated 20, 000 people were destroyed and killed during the crisis (World Bank Report, 2023 & Aina, et al, 2023)

As the armed banditry rages on with rising tension in Nigeria, the government responses have basically been through mass deployment of troops to counter the activities of the insurgents. No doubt there have been numerous assessments and studies on emergence of armed bandits, why most of their attacks on communities and government institutions were successful despite military presence, the extent of resources lost and measures taken to ensure the menace is brought under government control as reported (Abdulkarim, 2020; Adesoji, 2022 & Onuoha, 2023).

Since the fight against the armed banditry started, the military have been drawn into the fight and in her task towards bringing down the bandits. If the military must achieve a great and

secured nation, the bond of synergy and common understanding between the military and civilians must be perpetually nurtured, particularly as the military subordinates itself to civil power. The Nigerian military in its quest for harmonious civil-military relations recently established a department of Civil Military Relations at the Defence Headquarters to promote the common understanding (DHN, 2024). The department is expected to enhance civilian-military cooperation and serve as a confidence building avenue between the military and their civilian counterparts. The narrow view of security processes has caused tension between the military, the security apparatus, and civil society (DHN, 2024). The military's role is seen as solely protecting the top leadership, leading to conflict with civil society. Their differing views on what constitutes security and the fact that civilians are sometimes targeted by the military result in this discord (Adekanye, 2010). For example, during military coups, civilians have been arrested since the 1966 coup, and their guilt was determined by military tribunals (Aina et al, 2023).

At the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war, and during all military operations, civilian-military operations are essential to the military instrument to coordinate the integration of military and nonmilitary instruments of national power, particularly in support of stability, counter-insurgency and other operations that have to do with asymmetric and irregular threats (Fayemi 2023). Because they may permeate other aspects of national security and military strategy for an operation or campaign, civil military operations are inherently strategic in nature and key to achieving national security objective. It is no doubt that the military and the civilians have come into an understanding that a peaceful society can only be built by the coming together of the two parties and that is why it becomes important to ensure that some steps must be taken to build up a better relationship among them.

### **Conclusion/Recommendations**

The cooperation between the civilian and the military in fight against armed banditry in any society cannot be overemphasized and this has brought the military and the civilian together in a conscious effort to fight bandits. The emergence of armed banditry in Northwest Nigeria poses a real and existential threat to Nigeria's national security in the zone and the entire country, reflected in its consequences on lives lost, properties destroyed and the severity of the humanitarian crisis that has emanated. This has necessitated the Nigerian state's response through military action.

The military's prospects and challenges in the troubled region have been mostly lack of cooperation from the public. This paper therefore contributes to the body of knowledge by examining the significance of the military-civilian cooperation to fight internal security operations against banditry in Northwest Nigeria. It is a common knowledge that the military and other security operatives deployed to fight bandit are not members of the communities that are affected by the activities of insurgents. For this reason, it behooves on both the security agencies and the members of affected communities to see themselves as partners in the struggle. This is because the members of the communities are very familiar with the environment and have certain information that can facilitate the operation of the military and other security agencies engage in the fight against banditry.

Furthermore, the military by their training are capable of countering banditry that emanated from among the people, while the people who are well informed about the activities of the groups may not have the capability to confront the bandits. Hence, collaboration becomes necessary if the people of North-West Nigeria want to continue to enjoy lasting peace in their communities. Therefore, the paper recommended that:

- i. The study recommends that the cooperation between the military and the host communities should be strengthened. This can be achieved through the provision of certain incentives to the civilians who provide useful information about the armed bandits. The military can also embark on community development projects such as water supply, road network, educational facility and healthcare project for the people.

- ii. Both the military and the civilians in Nigeria should be educated on their respective roles in fight against banditry. The military should desist from maltreating and molesting the civilians who have useful information that can help them in their war against bandits. On the other hand, the civilians should also be in the know that the military people are fighting banditry not for the interest of the military but most importantly for the interest of the people and the country at large.
- iii. In order to further strengthen the relationship between the military and civilians in fighting insurgency in Nigeria, government should endeavor to provide the people of the affected communities with their basic needs. Failure to do that will create a bad image about the government in the eyes of the members of the communities. This could generate lack of confidence in the military operations.
- iv. Also to reduce the recruitment of jobless youths into armed banditry, government should reduce youth joblessness and provide job opportunities for the teeming youths. This could be achieved by revitalizing all existence sectors of the economy that has been closed down.

## References

- Adedeji, A.G. & Zabadi, I.S. (2015). *The Military Management of Internal Conflict in Nigeria*. Abuja: National War College.
- Adejoh, P. (2017). *Terrorism and Counter Terrorism War in Nigeria*: Lagos: University press Ltd.
- Adekanye, J. B. & Williams, I. (2020). *Civil-Military Relations and Consolidation of Democracy in Nigeria*. Lagos: IDEA Ltd.
- Adesola, N.A. (2018). *Combating terrorism and insurgency in contemporary times: The imperative of air power*. Ibadan: Gold press Limited.
- Aina, F., Ojo, J. S. & Oyewole, S. (2023) Shock and awe: Military response to armed banditry and the prospects of internal security operations in Northwest Nigeria. *African Security Review*, 3(2): 1-18
- Allan, M. (2024). Terrorism will not be won except security operatives get the cooperation of Nigerians. Speech delivered at the inauguration of Inter-Agency Civil-military Cooperation Community (C.M.C) at the National Defence College, Abuja.
- Amosu, A. (2015). We have dealt with Boko-Haram: Additional Protocol I, Article 50 (adopted by consensus) (cited in vol. II, chp1, 705).
- Ayitogo, N. (2022). 'Bandits Attack Military Base in Zamfara; 12 Personnel Pay Supreme Price'. Premium Times, 2021. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/-bandits-attack-military-base-in-zamfara12-personnel-pay-supreme-price.html> accessed March 15, 2024).
- Ayuba, C. (2015). Civil-Military Relations in Peacebuilding: Boko-Haram in Perspective. *African Journal of International Affairs & Development*, 18(1/2), 84-94.
- Babangida, I.B. (2018). National Security Threat. A Summit at the 4<sup>th</sup> National Civil-Military Dialogue, Abuja on 15 March, 2013.
- Badeh, A. (2015). Insurgency: Security Agencies to Improve Relationship with Civilians. A Paper delivered at the Inauguration of the Inter-Agency Civil-military Cooperation Community (Cimic) at the National Defence College, Abuja, on 2/9/14.
- Baraya, M. (2018). The Dynamics of Civil-Military Relations in Nigeria. A Paper presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> National Civil-military Dialogue, Abuja, 1<sup>st</sup> July – 4<sup>th</sup>th, 2013.
- Bintube, M. (2019). Boko Haram Phenomenon: Genesis and Development in North Eastern Region Nigeria. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research*. 1(1): 1-22.
- David, G.E. (2018). Police role in counterinsurgency Efforts. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*. 59(1); 148-151.
- Defence Headquarters Nigeria. (2024) 'Troops of Operation Hadarin Daji in a Fierce Encounter Neutralises Bandits at Zurmi Zamfara State <https://defenceinfo.mil.ng/troops-of>

- operation-hadarin-dajjin-a-fierce-encounter-neutralizes-bandits-at-zurmi-zamfara-state/  
(accessed July 18, 2022)
- Fayemi, K. (2019). *Towards a Comprehensive National Security Strategy*. Kuru: NIPPS.
- Gowon, Y. (2019). The Challenges in Nigeria's Civil-military Relations. The 4<sup>th</sup> National Civil Military Dialogue in Abuja, Nigeria.
- Ibrahim, J. (2018). Rising Insecurity and Need for Cordial Civil-military Relation. [www- dailytrust.com.ng/.../8609-rising](http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/.../8609-rising). Retrieved on 11/8,2020.
- Ibrahim, J. (2023). The Norms for Civil-Military Relations in Nigeria. *Premium Times*, October 28, 2013.
- Igbo, E.M. (2013). *Aetiology of Crime: Perspectives in Theoretical Criminology*. Enugu: New Generation Books
- Kwache, E. (2021). Nigeria: For Better Civilian-military Relations.
- Kwaji, M. (2016). Nigerian Sectarian Group, Boko Haram, Demands Islamic State. <http://www.the-guardian.com/world/2013may/09/boko-haram-nigeria-islamic.state>. Retrieved 21/08/2018
- Mohammed, M. (2017). *Global Terrorism: The Nigerian Experience in Taming Boko Haram*. A Publication in Honour of Lieutenant General Tukur Buratai.
- Muazu, A., Ibrahim, M. and Kura, A.M. (2017). Enhancing Civilian and Military Relations to Prevent Insurgency in Borno State, Nigeria. *American International Journal of Social Science Vol. 6, No. 2,P. 36-39*.
- Ngoma, N. (2016). Civil-Military Relations in Africa: Navigating Uncharted Waters. *African Security Review*; 12(4): 84-89.
- Nwolise, O.B. (2017). Nigeria's Anti-Terror War against Boko Haram: The Turning Point and Lessons for National Security and Development. Abuja: Ply-Mak service Ltd.
- Obasanjo, O. (2023). "Mr. President save Nigeria" The Nation Newspaper, Thursday 12, December 2013.
- Ochoche, S. (2010). *The military as an institution for peace and stability in Africa. The project on the African Union and the challenges of cooperation and integration*. Abuja: MCIA.
- Oduwole, T.A. (2016). Theoretical dimensions of societal ill-values: Insurgency, counter insurgency and sustainable transformation agenda. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research*. 2(1):17-39.
- Ogye, D. O. & Takwa, I. G. (2020). Civilian- Military cooperation in fight against Boko-Haram in North-East, Nigeria. *African Journal of Modern Society*, 6(1); 1-19.
- Olukolade, C. (2018). Issues in the Mobilization of Public Support for Military Operations in Nigeria. Ibadan: Gold Press Limited.
- Omodunbi, O.O., Olawole, O.S., Owasanoye, O.I. & Ige, R.A. (2019). Civil-Military Relation and Counter Insurgency in Nigeria: A Case of Boko Haram. *Uniosun Journal of Politics and Society*; 5(1): 25-42.
- Petinrin, O. O. (2022). The Importance of Public Support in Fight against Insurgents in Nigeria. Lecture delivered at a Seminar Organized by the Nigerian Air Force.
- Takwa, I. G. (2016). The Implications of Boko-Haram Activities on National Development. Unpublished Seminar Paper Presented to Department of Sociology, 2016.
- Xfire, F. (2018). Top Definition of Civilian. Civilian.[www.urbandictionary.com](http://www.urbandictionary.com)