BANDITRY AND SECURITY GOVERNANCE IN NORTHWEST NIGERIA: STATE FRAGILITY AND INSTITUTIONAL FAILURE

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Banditry, State Fragility, Institutional Failure, Hybrid Governance, Northwest, Nigeria

Abstract

Research Problem
Banditry in Northwest Nigeria has turned into a long-term security challenge that shows severe state fragility, institutional incoherence, and politically driven governance failures. Despite several military operations and policy changes, formal institutions still continue to fail in stopping violence, which allows hybrid security arrangements and informal security structures to become more entrenched.

Methods/Theory
This study uses a qualitative research approach, grounded on the secondary data from policy reports, scholarly publications, and verified media sources. It integrates state fragility theory with rational choice institutionalism, which together help to explain how weak institutions and elite political incentives shape patterns of insecurity in Kaduna, Katsina, and Zamfara States.

Results
The findings show that banditry is not merely a consequence of poverty, environmental pressure, or inadequate capacity, but rather a politically mediated outcome of fragmented governance and elite exploitation of state resources. Hybrid state governance, characterized by the coexistence of state forces, vigilantes, and armed groups, has become an institutionalized way of doing things. This has changed the balance of power and made people less trusting of the state. The study further reveals

how ransom economies, informal negotiations, and criminal governance reinforce institutional decay and legitimize non-state authority.

Conclusion

Banditry persists because institutional fragility is both exploited and reproduced by political actors. As hybrid governance expands, state legitimacy erodes, and violent acts become embedded in everyday political life.

Key Contribution to Knowledge

The study proposes a causal framework that links elite rationality, institutional failure, and hybrid security arrangements, offering a more politically grounded explanation of banditry in fragile contexts.

Recommendation

Addressing the banditry crisis requires decentralization reforms, rebuilding judicial capacity, community-based security arrangements, and development strategies that directly tackle structural drivers of fragility.

Introduction

The Northwest region of Nigeria has recently emerged as a significant hub of violent instability, primarily instigated by loosely organised armed factions referred to as bandits. The issue originated with conflicts between Fulani cattle herders and farmers, subsequently escalating into a multifaceted network of criminal and political violence, encompassing mass murders, abductions for ransom, and the devastation of rural villages (ICG 2020). This escalation has compromised the authority of the Nigerian State and revealed the vulnerability of its governance and security agencies. The ongoing crisis is exacerbating, revealing the clear interrelation among fragile institutions, elite political agendas, and informal power structures.

Most academic examinations of banditry and insecurity in Nigeria have predominantly highlighted the socioeconomic and environmental factors contributing to the issue. Okoli and Ugwu (2019) and Blench (2003) attribute the occurrence to poverty, competition for resources, and the disintegration of rural livelihoods. Although these studies offer significant insights, they neglect the institutional and political frameworks that facilitate violence. Research on state fragility by Rotberg (2004) and institutional failure by Peters (2019) elucidates the consequences of inadequate governance and diminished legitimacy, although often conceptualises fragility as a national issue rather than one that fluctuates within subnational contexts. Simultaneously, Meagher's (2012) hybrid governance perspective elucidates the shared power of non-state actors and the state, although it fails to adequately clarify the emergence of this arrangement from intentional political decisions.

This study addresses the gap by examining the persistent phenomenon of banditry in Northwest Nigeria using a comprehensive framework of state fragility theory and rational choice institutionalism. It posits that banditry is not merely a criminal or economic concern but a politically rational consequence of tenuous government, perpetuated by elites who gain from feeble institutions and informal authority. This approach perceives institutional failure not merely as an absence of capability but also as a strategic context that facilitates the proliferation of hybrid security systems.

This research examines qualitative studies from Kaduna, Katsina, and Zamfara States to

investigate how elite behaviour, overlapping security mandates, and inadequate institutional coordination perpetuate cycles of violence. This study improves understanding of Nigeria's security issue by integrating institutional and political economics views, uncovering the fundamental mechanisms of postcolonial state fragility and the erosion of legitimate authority.

Research Problem

This paper examines the ongoing inadequacy of Nigeria's institutional security and governance institutions in curbing the rising rural banditry in the Northwest, despite many military operations and policy measures. This failure indicates not only operational deficiencies but also a profound institutional and political crisis stemming from state instability and elite motivations. While current literature has elucidated banditry via socioeconomic deprivation, ecological stress, and rural criminality (Ayegbusi, 2024; Blench &Dendo, 2003; Ejiofor, 2022), it has inadequately examined the role of elite behaviour and institutional fragility in perpetuating insecurity. Rotberg (2004) and Desai (2020) typically analyse state fragility as a national issue, whereas institutionalist theorists such as Peters (2019) and Okeye et al. (2025) focus on administrative failure, neglecting the rational political interests that sustain weak institutions. Consequently, there is a constrained comprehension of why the state's countermeasures continue to be ineffectual, despite substantial security resources.

This paper analyses banditry within an institutional-political framework, contending that insecurity in Northwest Nigeria results from the interaction of weak governance systems, elite rationality, and hybrid security arrangements. The study problem is not merely state incompetence but the deliberate maintenance of chaos within a fragmented political economy. Thus, the article establishes a causal framework linking institutional failure to the political continuation of violence, so redefining banditry as a governance dilemma rather than solely a criminal or security concern.

Research Objectives

The study pursues the following specific objectives:

The aim of this study is to examine how state fragility, institutional weakness, and elite political incentives interact to sustain the persistence of banditry in Northwestern Nigeria.

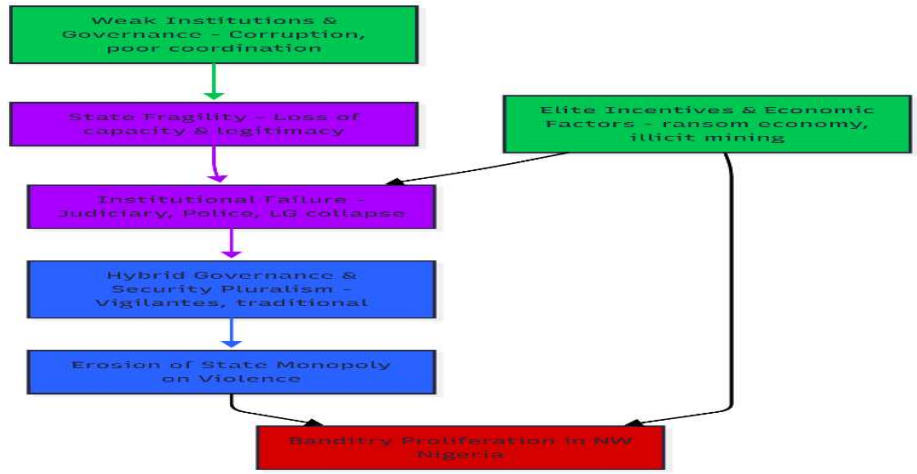
To analyze the nature and implications of hybrid security governance in Kaduna, Katsina, and Zamfara States and how it affects state legitimacy and public trust.

Conceptual Clarification

This study focusses on four essential concepts: banditry, state fragility, institutional failure, and security governance, elucidating their analytical significance in the context of Northwest Nigeria.
In this context, banditry transcends the concept of typical rural crime. It pertains to the systematic and prolonged violence perpetrated by non-state actors who use inadequate state authority to acquire power and profit. This study posits that banditry signifies not only inadequate governance but also represents a manifestation of informal power arising from the erosion of governmental authority. State fragility is defined not only as a diminished capacity but also as a spatially unequal and politically influenced condition characterised by the selective absence of state authority. In this instance, fragility in Northwestern Nigeria arises from prolonged neglect of governance, elite-induced distortions of public institutions, and disjointed security provision.

Institutional failure is thus perceived as both a cause and a consequence of this predicament. The police, judiciary, and local government are not only underfunded but are frequently intentionally undermined and politicised, resulting in governance gaps that armed groups exploit.
Security governance refers to the organisation and management of security by both state and non-state entities. In vulnerable areas such as Northwestern Nigeria, it typically manifests in hybrid forms, characterised by overlapping responsibilities and informal governance. The article highlights that banditry is fundamentally linked to the interplay of institutional coherence, authority, and the breakdown of legitimacy. This viewpoint offers a more crucial and significant basis for comprehending how non-state actors integrate into routine governance.

Causal Argument Diagram on Theoretical Framework



The causal argument diagram elucidates the correlation between feeble political institutions and the motivations of the political elite as the principal determinants of state fragility and institutional collapse in Nigeria's Northwest region. The inherent vulnerabilities create a hybrid governance system, wherein informal players, devoid of formal authority, undermine the state's capacity to monopolise violence. This subversion enables the systemic emergence and entrenchment of banditry as a phenomena. This graphic seeks to integrate rational choice institutionalism with state fragility theory to elucidate the interplay between governance failure, political economy, and security pluralism in perpetuating violence. To combat banditry, it is essential to restructure fundamental institutions and alter the incentives of elites that flourish in conditions of persistent chaos, insecurity, and fractured governmental authority.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, as the phenomenon of banditry and security government in Northwestern Nigeria necessitates interpretive analysis above statistical evaluation. The interplay of state fragility, institutional dysfunction, and hybrid governance encompasses political processes, informal power dynamics, and social significances that are more effectively comprehended through qualitative assessment. The sensitivity of the subject and the instability in the impacted regions restrict the accessibility and dependability of primary quantitative data. Utilising qualitative secondary sources, including policy reports,

academic literature, and credible media reporting, facilitates the study's ability to encapsulate the intricacies of the conflict context and deliver a comprehensive evaluation of how governance disintegration perpetuates banditry.

Historical Roots of Banditry in Northern Nigeria

Rural banditry in northwest Nigeria is not a contemporary occurrence. Since colonial times, the government has consistently neglected it, resulting in contentious border contacts. The British colonisers implemented indirect control in Northern Nigeria, reinforcing existing traditional leadership systems but largely neglecting the socio-economic development of rural regions (Miles, 2015). The post-independence Nigerian government perpetuated this inequity and failed to strategically integrate the marginalised rural communities into the national economy.

Blench and Dendo (2003) ascribe the escalating conflicts between farmers and herders in Northwest Nigeria to ecological stressors, diminishing pastureland, and the disintegration of the conventional cattle business. Their findings is beneficial as it demonstrates that environmental stress is a persistent catalyst for violence in rural regions. This explanation is insufficient by itself. Other scholars have demonstrated that these conflicts were precipitated by governance issues, inadequate dispute resolution systems, and the politicisation of ethnic identities (Meagher, 2012). An analysis of different viewpoints reveals that the land-use disputes of the 1990s were not merely a response to natural scarcity, but also a consequence of institutional neglect and evolving political incentives. This nuanced comprehension is essential for elucidating how localised conflicts subsequently transformed into the more structured and brutal manifestations of banditry that define the region today.

Likewise, the economic liberalisation of the 1980s and 1990s, particularly the execution of structural adjustment programs (SAPs), diminished state expenditure, undermined public institutions, and depleted local governance capabilities (Mustapha, 2000). While this research appropriately highlights the economic ramifications of SAFs, their influence in Northwest Nigeria extends beyond just fiscal contraction. The state's retrenchment has resulted in governance vacuums in rural regions, diminished regulatory control, and impaired the capacity of formal institutions to resolve local problems. In my opinion, these measures inadvertently transformed the political landscape by enhancing the opportunity for informal actors and nascent criminal networks to function with limited governmental oversight. Consequently, SAPs not only undermined institutions but also substantially facilitated the long-term structural conditions that subsequently enabled the emergence of banditry.

Contemporary Drivers of Banditry

In northwestern Nigeria, banditry has transformed from a rudimentary criminal activity into a complex and organised system of violence encompassing kidnapping, armed militias, local informants, and government corruption. Multiple interconnected elements are contributing to its evolution:
a) Poverty and Unemployment

The Northwest region is among the most impoverished areas in Nigeria. Zamfara, Katsina, and Sokoto exhibit some of the greatest multidimensional poverty indices in the nation (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). However, poverty alone does not explain the increasing violent conflict. In circumstances where the government fails to offer security or economic prospects,

deprivation serves as a recruitment tool for armed factions. The analysis indicates that juvenile participation in banditry is driven by both material necessity and the lack of viable state-sponsored avenues for subsistence, fundamental education, and security. Consequently, economic marginalisation exacerbates institutional failure and facilitates the entrenchment of bandit gangs in ungoverned rural areas.

c) Proliferation of Small Arms

Criminal factions in Northwest Nigeria are predominantly dependent on small arms and light weapons (SALWs). The shared borders of Niger and Chad with Nigeria, coupled with trafficking routes from Mali and Libya, have resulted in an influx of illicit weapons into the country (Okeke & Oji, 2014). The importance of this proliferation extends beyond mere weapon availability. This illustrates the incapacity of governmental institutions to oversee and manage boundaries or sustain coercive dominance. The capacity of these bandits to wield advanced weaponry often surpasses that of security forces, further undermining state authority and hastening the transition to hybrid security frameworks, wherein non-state actors such as bandits exert coercion with few constraints.

c) Ethnic and Communal Strife

The influence of ethnicity in this conflict is more intricate than prevailing narratives suggest. Monday and Okpanachi (2019) contend that characterising bandits primarily as members of the Fulani ethnic group has resulted in ethnic retaliation and profiling, especially from the Yan Sakai Hausa vigilante factions. Their analysis is valuable for comprehending how ethnic views influence cycles of violence; yet, it diminishes the role of political manipulation of identity by local elites and the inadequacy of official conflict-resolution systems. In my view, ethnicity functions less as the principal cause of banditry and more as a framework through which communities perceive insecurity in the absence of reliable official authority. This elucidates the entrenchment of profiling and reprisals, exacerbating social fragmentation and jeopardising intercommunal harmony.

d) Issues of Insecurity and Corruption

Similar to other rural regions in the Northwest, security infrastructure is limited. This region exhibits a conspicuous deficiency of police stations, and the military operates in a predominantly reactive manner, intervening solely in response to incidents rather than adopting a proactive stance. Reports indicate corruption within several government security services. Individuals assert that security personnel solicit illicit payments for delivering protection and security services (Ayegbusi, 2024).

Ransom Economy and Criminal Government

The emergence of a ransom-driven economy has become a hallmark of banditry in contemporary Nigeria. Ejiofor (2022) illustrates that kidnapping-for-ransom typically depends on informal negotiation methods that completely circumvent governmental institutions, progressively bestowing criminal entities with a semblance of quotidian authority. This is a significant observation; yet, it does not comprehensively elucidate what these activities indicate regarding the state itself. The increasing reliance on informal payment channels signifies a profound erosion of public trust. Individuals engage in negotiations with bandits not solely out of necessity, but also due to the prevalent perception that law enforcement, judicial systems, and other official institutions are unreliable or potentially corrupt. The ransom economy is simultaneously a consequence of institutional frailty and a mechanism that exacerbates it in the Northwest.

In specific circumstances, bandit gangs

function as de facto authorities, overseeing tax collection, mediating disputes, and providing security services in return for allegiance or compensation. This type of criminal governance exacerbates the absence of state institutions, leading to the supremacy of non-state criminal entities. In certain villages, inhabitants allegedly favour bandit intervention for resolving issues rather than confronting pervasive police corruption.

Failed State Response

The Nigerian government's strategy to address banditry has predominantly been military, employing the Nigerian Army, Mobile Police units, and specialised security task teams like Operation HadarinDaji and Operation Puff Adder. Although many operations may have accomplished immediate tactical goals, they have not succeeded in achieving enduring strategic success in destroying bandit networks or addressing the root causes of insecurity. Moreover, certain negotiation strategies devised and executed by particular state administrations have sparked controversy. In Zamfara, attempts to negotiate with specific bandit leaders have failed to provide lasting peace due to the absence of accountability mechanisms. According to Adibe et al. (2024), the lack of authentic accountability suggests that numerous armed factions may revert to their violent behaviours once negotiations falter. Critics contend that these agreements were more detrimental than advantageous. Their actions conferred legitimacy upon the armed organisation, exacerbating the cycle of impunity and further undermining public trust in a state that already grapples with establishing effective authority.

Regional and Transnational Aspects

The situation in Northwest Nigeria possesses both regional and international aspects, particularly regarding the mobility of armed factions and the illicit arms trade. The Sahel region is currently engaged in a jihadist insurgency and has ineffective border control measures, enabling violence to infiltrate Nigeria. Certain bandit gangs are reported to have established opportunistic alliances with jihadist organisations linked to the Islamic State of Greater Sahara and Jama'at Nasr al-Islam walMuslimin (JNIM). These connections, however, are often non-ideological and ephemeral (Ojewale, 2025).

Humanitarian Impact

The ramifications of banditry are catastrophic, particularly in humanitarian aspects. The persistent violence in Northern Nigeria has resulted in the displacement of more than two million individuals, predominantly located in the Northwest region, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (United Nations OCHA, 2023). Internally displaced persons (IDPs) reside in congested camps or with host families, facing insufficient access to sustenance, healthcare, or education. The ongoing disruption of agriculture, trade, and education has intensified economic stagnation and resulted in chronic instability for millions.

Conceptualizing Security Governance

Security governance can be defined as the institutions, culture, and processes that specify how security is delivered, sustained, and regulated within a society (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2010). This suggests that in effectively operating governments, there exists a degree of integration between formal security institutions, such as the police, military, and intelligence agencies, and civilian oversight entities, including the legislature and civil society. In weak governments, security governance is frequently disjointed, reactive, and intensely politicised.

In the instance of Nigeria, the security governance structure exhibits a consistent concentration of authority at the federal level, a lack of cohesion across security components,

inadequate accountability mechanisms, and minimal community involvement. Despite constitutional mandates delineating responsibilities for law and order between federal and regional entities, Nigeria functions under a centralised security framework wherein the federal government monopolises military, police, and intelligence services.

This hierarchical approach persists in limiting the autonomy of state governments in addressing localised security issues and stifling innovation in security service supply. Moreover, it establishes a harmful divide between security providers and the populace requiring service, leading to a decline in public trust and underreporting of crime figures.

Security Sector Weaknesses in Northwest Nigeria

The security sector in Northwestern Nigeria is plagued by various institutional deficiencies that intensify the issue of banditry. They encompass: a. Insufficient resources and inadequate training
The Nigerian Police Force (NPF) is deficient in sufficient budgetary allocations and human resources. The CLEEN Foundation (2021) indicates that the quantity of Nigerian police officers significantly falls short of the United Nations' benchmark of one police officer per 450 persons. Extensive banditry in rural regions is a significant difficulty for law enforcement. The challenge is tough for unskilled and unequipped individuals who lack the information and resources to confront mobile and well-armed bandit groups. Due to inadequate resources, police outposts are organised in a way that they can either be overwhelmed by these groups or compelled to vacate their positions entirely.

b. Redundant Responsibilities and Ineffective Coordination
Nigeria's security apparatus comprises the military, police force, Department of State Services (DSS), and Civil Defence Corps. These agencies function with little cooperation and exhibit overlap in certain operational domains. Ukase (2015) indicates that this results in redundancy, inefficiency, and the misallocation of resources. In several instances, the military has executed counter-piracy operations and raids without informing the police, resulting in deficiencies in operational coordination among the various authorities.

c. Corruption and Impunity
Corruption is a pervasive consequence of security governance across nearly all tiers of security forces. Multiple citizen complaints suggest that security personnel solicit bribes at checkpoints. They also undermine logistical deliveries and participate in rent-seeking activities during assignments (Amnesty International, 2020). These actions significantly erode confidence and foster anger, which bandits exploit to garner local support or exert power. Security forces have been said to collude with bandits, either by accepting bribes for silence or by participating in ransom discussions for personal gain. The absence of reliable systems for inquiry and sanction has led to an atmosphere of unchecked violations.

Political Interference and the Politicization of Security

The security government in Nigeria has become significantly politicised. Political elites at both federal and state levels often exploit security agencies for personal or political advantage rather than for the safety of the public. Although state governors are designated as the "chief security officers" of their states, they lack constitutional authority over the police and military, thus relying significantly on the federal government for any actions (Ogunwa&Abasilim, 2024). This systemic reliance obstructs local initiatives in addressing security concerns and prolongs emergency response times. Furthermore, the

widespread political patronage structures have occasionally enabled the rise of violent factions that are then utilised as tools for election intimidation or bargaining. A number of politicians in the Northwest are accused of endorsing armed factions or vigilante violence during electoral cycles, resulting in their subsequent loss of authority following the elections. This loop of political exploitation erodes long-term stability and exacerbates chronic insecurity.

Political Economy of Institutional Failure

The political economy of Nigeria perpetuates an institutional failure wherein disruption is lucrative. Political elites at both the state and federal levels often use informal economies such as ransom markets, illegal mining, and arms trafficking that flourish in unstable areas (Reno, 2015). Politicians, to a certain degree, do empower local warlords or armed youths during electoral campaigns and subsequently lose control over them. Thus, the orchestration of violence offers a distorted justification for sustaining an ongoing condition of susceptibility. Certain politicians opt to negotiate amnesty agreements or financially compensate violent factions in return for purported protection instead of substantially reforming security and judicial systems. Such agreements are frequently transient, and more critically, these arrangements erode the state's legitimacy in the perception of the citizenry.

Discussion of Findings

This section analyses the study's findings concerning the two specified research objectives. It rigorously examines the literature, elucidates the conceptual and theoretical ramifications, and illustrates how the study's findings either correspond with or diverge from prior research. The discourse also delineates the author's stance grounded in the evidence.

Research Objective One: Understanding How State Fragility, Weak Institutions, and Political Incentives Sustain Banditry in Northwest Nigeria

This research indicates that state fragility in Northwestern Nigeria is not solely due to insufficient capacity, but is instead a politically influenced situation created by elite motivations and disjointed governance practices. The discourse on banditry frequently highlights environmental stress, rural impoverishment, and economic deterioration (Blench &Dendo, 2003; Okoli&Ugwu, 2019). Although these views recognise significant structural forces, they often underestimate the political incentives that perpetuate institutional deterioration. This study's research indicates that institutional weakness endures as influential actors gain from a security environment marked by chaos, informal power, and ambiguous decision-making procedures.

This corresponds with rational choice institutionalism, which emphasises that political elites sustain weak institutions when it serves their strategic interests. The persistent inadequacy of security reforms, the selective endorsement of vigilante factions, and the dependence on informal discussions with armed entities indicate a systematic approach to governing rather than an inadvertent collapse. This research demonstrates that fragility in the Northwest is spatially unequal and is perpetuated by state practices that marginalise rural populations while facilitating elite control of security rents, in contrast to Rotberg's (2004) larger characterisation of fragility as a national-level phenomena.

The result also refutes earlier research that attribute banditry exclusively to socioeconomic deprivation. This study demonstrates that while poverty and unemployment create recruitment opportunities, the persistent nature of violence is mostly anchored in political decisions that

weaken formal institutions, leaving communities dependent on informal groups. The analysis confirms that banditry continues because of the interaction between fragmented authority and elite incentives, establishing a governance environment where violence is viewed as a rational and profitable strategy for both state and non-state actors.

Research Objective Two: Examining the Nature and Implication of Hybrid Security Governance in Kaduna, Katsina, and Zamfara

The findings of this research demonstrate that the security governance frameworks in Northwestern Nigeria comprise a combination of state actors, vigilantes, and bandit groups that wield authority in a hybrid manner. These findings support the assertions of hybrid governance theorists (Meagher, 2012) that in fragile environments, state power is predominantly decentralised, redefined, and challenged. The study advances the hybrid governance literature by demonstrating that in the Northwest, governance is not merely a reaction to a fragile state; rather, it arises from deliberate political strategies that purposely confuse both official and informal coercive mechanisms.

The rise of a ransom economy, informal negotiating pathways, and criminal governance structures demonstrates the degree to which non-state actors have infiltrated roles typically linked to state authority. The findings indicate both the decline of state legitimacy and the normalisation of alternative governance structures wherein bandit leaders arbitrate conflicts, enforce adherence, and control resource distribution. This type of authority endures due to the erosion of public trust in formal security agencies, rendering informal systems seemingly more reliable, yet repressive.

Current research acknowledges the presence of informal security networks but often portrays them as rival structures. This study offers a refined perspective by emphasising the complex interplay between elite political conduct and institutional incentives within the Northwest's hybrid governance framework. Contentious negotiating efforts in Zamfara, conducted without accountability mechanisms, illustrate the direct establishment of hybrid governance rooted in state policies. This study asserts that hybrid security governance has been institutionalised, shaping community perceptions of legitimacy and authority, unlike earlier interpretations that viewed these arrangements as transient crisis responses.

The establishment of hybrid governance systems increases state withdrawal and institutionalises violence within daily political life. This finding contrasts with the prevailing idea that hybrid systems address governance shortages; rather, the research indicates that they also generate new governance vacuums by diminishing incentives for institutional improvement.

Overall Theoretical Implications

The findings collectively support the assertion that the enduring nature of banditry in Northwestern Nigeria is most effectively analysed through a political-institutional framework. The study illustrates that institutional failure is not merely incidental or episodic, but is perpetually perpetuated by individuals who benefit from ambiguous authority and the expansion of informal organisations. This interpretation contests more linear models that assign violence mainly to poverty or environmental stress, emphasising instead the interaction among institutional fragility, elite motivations, and hybrid governance structures. The study contributes to ongoing discussions by demonstrating how the erosion of state power in certain areas allows non-state actors to integrate into community life, frequently offering services or protection that formal institutions are either unable or reluctant to provide. It provides a more nuanced analysis

of the relationship between violence and government, illustrating why the Northwest remains a locus of ongoing insecurity despite several policy initiatives.

Conclusion

This study's findings demonstrate a more sophisticated and politically contextualised comprehension of banditry in Northwestern Nigeria than is reflected in much of the existing literature. Prior work has highlighted ecological issues, rural impoverishment, and population pressures as the principal causes of violence. This paper contends that these aspects operate within a broader political and institutional framework marked by feeble authority, fragmented governance, and elite appropriation. The paper contends that banditry should not be perceived merely as a breakdown of order, but rather as a complex phenomenon that reflects a deeper comprehension of order as a construct of authority in the absence of a robust state or in the context of a state that is intentionally debilitated, divided, or withdrawn. This valuation of order, within the Northwest context, amalgamates hybrid governance structures and state fragility, primarily characterised by quotidian security.

Theoretically, the findings supported positions within institutionalist study that regard poor institutions as not merely incidental failures but also as consequences of political decisions that favour specific activities. The enduring nature of hybrid governance is seen in the functions of vigilantes, negotiation intermediates, and ransom-driven markets, which corroborate the previous assertion that informal systems address the deficiencies left by the state. The research also contests the presumption that such assumptions merely offset institutional inadequacies. This research illustrates how hybrid governance can become entrenched, progressively altering authority and perpetuating instability. This refinement enhances prior research by demonstrating that hybrid arrangements are not merely adaptive strategies but are increasingly fundamental to the organisation of security and power in the region.

Relative to prior research, the results both corroborate and diverge from known narratives. They concur with scholarship that recognises the diminishment of state capability as a pivotal feature in rural insecurity, although they differ from studies that regard banditry only as a consequence of environmental degradation or as an economic response. The present research underscores the influence of political incentives, institutional manipulation, and governance vacuums in perpetuating armed groups, thereby providing a cohesive explanation that links local violence to broader state behaviour patterns.

This study concludes that the persistence of banditry is not solely a result of socio-economic adversity but rather a product of the negotiation of power, authority, and legitimacy under precarious political contexts. By contextualising these findings within theoretical and conceptual frameworks, the research elucidates the persistence of banditry and its entrenchment in the governance environment of Northwestern Nigeria. This conclusion underscores both the study's alignment with current research and its provision of novel insights, so elucidating its contribution to the broader scholarship on state fragility and the political economy of violence.

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