

Appraising the National Defense Policy on incessant Banditry attack in North Central: A Focus on Borgu Local Government area of Niger State

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ABSTRACT : The Nigeria National Defense Policy (NDP) which emanates from the National Security Strategy, focuses on the preservation of the safety of Nigerian at home and abroad and the protection of the sovereignty of the country and the integrity of the assets. Contrary to the objectives, the policy seems to be ineffective assessing on the spate of violent conflicts, chaos, anarchy and disorderliness arising from the incessant banditry attacks in the northern parts of the country. This study concentrated on appraising the National Defense Policy on incessant banditry attack in North Central with focus on Borgu Local Government area, Niger State, within 2025-2026. The study assesses the major idea behind formulation of the National Defense Policy, and, consequences of incessant banditry attacks in Borgu local area, Niger state is meticulously discussed. The paper thereafter, try to measure the significance of the National Defense policy effort on incessant bandits attack in Borgu local government. Survey research design was adopted, data were generated through interview of key informants, focus group discussion and observation. Under the secondary method, data were collected through internet, journals, newspapers and other print materials relevant to the study. The study adopted ungoverned spaces theory, which explain areas where a country lacks control or presence become havens for criminal activity and threats to a country. Findings reveals that, recent banditry attacks have brought major setbacks on the education and economic status in Borgu local government area, as a result of the default in the National Defense Policy design, implementation and other factors attached. Based on this, the study recommends, the use of military expert personnels in policy design and implementation, review section policy on authority, policy geared on provision of military hardware, policy on human capital development and motivation should be adequately implement. Implementing these recommendations will guarantee success on combating the incessant bandit attacks in Borgu local government and other affected regions in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: *National Defense Policy, Bandits and Incessant Banditry*

I. INTRODUCTION

While democratic norms are taking root, the Nigeria security outlook remains precarious. Lately, the country continues to face down an oil-fueled militancy in the Niger Delta, waves of reprisal ethnic violence rebound between various tribes, farmers and pastoralists in the middle belt, the continuous counter insurgency, banditry attacks, and other criminal elements in the North East, North West and North central took advantage of the chaos to unleash their brand of mayhem upon citizens in region. In recent time, incessant banditry attacks in the north central states of Niger, Kwara, Benue, Kogi, Nasarawa and Plateau states is on increase and alarming. Ezikeudu, & Tersoo, (2023) observed that, banditry has emerged as a pervasive threat, plaguing communities and disrupting lives in the northern regions of Nigeria. Over time, this once sporadic issue has grown into a daily occurrence, particularly in states like Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Niger, Kaduna, Kebbi, Abuja, and Kogi.

In an effort to overcome these challenges, the Federal government through the ministry of defense in 2006 came up with national defense policy originated from the National Security Strategy plans with primary goal, of guarantee national security by deterring external threats and aggression, and, to avoid war through diplomacy and deterrence. The Nigeria National Defense Policy emanates from the National Security Strategy, which focuses on the preservation of the safety of Nigerian at home and abroad and the protection of the sovereignty of the country and the integrity of the assets. (Saleh and Émile. 2018; FRN, 1999). The policy will adequately equip the armed forces possess the capability to successfully defend the Nigerian territory and her national treasures including its citizens. (FRN, 1999).

Recently, there have been worries and fears among citizens especially, in the Northern regions on the continuous wave of insecurity happening in the country, that generated several comments on the purpose existence of the national defense policy, adjudged of lacking some basic capabilities, or the political will to implement the policy by the authorise institution. In Nigeria, governance policy deficiency has made it challenging to exterminate insecurity, provide infrastructural facilities, and curb poverty. (Yagboyaju and Akinola, 2019). The study examines the undermining gap leading to failure of the defense policy goal in achieving the expected positive results on incessant banditry attacks in Borgu local government area, Niger state.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is appraising the national defense policy on incessant banditry attack in Borgu local government area in Niger state. specifically, the study is to:

1. Assess the effect of incessant banditry attacks on social and economic system in Borgu local government, Niger state.
2. Identify the causes for failure of the national defense policy on addressing the incessant banditry attack in Borgu local government, Niger state.
3. Proffer answers to obstacles hindering the national defense policy on overcoming the incessant banditry attack in Borgu local government, Niger state.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts ungoverned spaces theory was advocated by prominent theorists like; Anne L. Clunan and Harold A. in Trinkunas book “Ungoverned Space: Alternatives to state Authority in Era of Softened Sovereignty” (2010). The theory posits that areas where the country lacks control or presence become havens for criminal activity, violent and potentially terrorist groups, armed banditry, kidnapping etc. The spaces are branded by weak governance, weak or absence of rule of law, poor policy plans and implementation, weak security institutions and, inadequate infrastructure and potential for exploitation by non- state actors. The assumption of the theory is that, areas lacking effective state control become haven for violent actors leading to instability and security threats. The ungoverned spaces allow violent non- state actors to operate outside the reach of law enforcement. This theory also assumes that ungoverned spaces can serve as breeding grounds for criminal activities, terrorism, banditry and kidnapping and other forms of violence. Some critics argue that, the ungoverned spaces theory over simplifies complex situations and may not fully capture the nuances of conflicts and stability. They further argue that, factors such as poverty, inequality, and deprivation may be more important causes of violence

The use of ungoverned spaces and state fragility theory, is to appraise the national defense policy on incessant banditry attack in Borgu local government area. The theory captured the dysfunctional of the national defense policy, poor implementation and executions resulting to inadequacy performance of the Nigerian Army comprises of the Military, Airforce and Navy on quick effective responds to banditry attacks, kidnapping, farmers and herders conflicts etc mostly occurred in the Northern regions and recently in Borgu local government area, Niger state. The failed or poor implementation of the National defense policy goal “to guarantee national security, and, threat by deterring external threats and aggression”, and, the primary concern to avoiding war through diplomacy and deterrence,” resulted to the emergence of organised criminal groups that apparently over stretched the capacity of the Nigerian security arrangement. This explain why Borgu local government is under siege to incessant bandits attack. The hierarchy military institution policy decision making sluggish approach on implementing of the national defense policy, affecting the armed forces and other security architecture from winning several battles against the armed bandits, this failure also affects the social and economic growth of the areas spaces poorly managed governed, or ungoverned. The defaults or challenges in the national defense policy contributes to creation of ungoverned spaces, which in turn poses a great security to a state or country. Lawal, (2025) explained that, since nature does not abhors vacuum, the violent non- state actors such as bandits and kidnappers have therefore taken over the ungoverned or poorly governed spaces.

II. Literature Review / Conceptual Discuss

National Defense policy

The terror activities like kidnapping and armed banditry in the North central region, Nigeria, escalated and have to have taken more dangerous dimension and use of sophisticated weapons warfare such as AK-47 rifles, small arms and light weapons among others to threatening the peaceful existence of the citizens and country. This action necessitated a shift in the national defense strategies on formulation of the national defense policy aim to preserve, protect and check any act of terrorist threat to national sovereignty. Ayegba and Yerima, (2017) stated that, there is a strong need for alteration in the defense policy of nation to accommodate this alteration in pattern to deal with the insecurity challenges of the 21st century security environment.

In context, national defense policy is public policy dealing with national and international security matters involved the military architectures of a country. FRN, (2019). It comprises the measures and initiatives that governments do or do not take in relation to decision-making and strategic goals, such as when and how to commit national armed forces. Emmanuel and Tari, (2015) defined national defense policy as a comprehensive deliberate strategy established by government to protect its citizens, economy, and institutions from external threats and internal disorder. It acts as a framework for managing security risks and guiding how a nation commits armed forces and resources. Alli, (1994), defense policy is a “deliberate and obligatory plan of action to guide government decisions and achieve rational outcome on when and how to commit national armed forces. Fundamentally, the national defense policy is a strategic document bringing out how nation seeks to defend and protect its areas against any aggression. According to Davis, (2016), who reasoned that "a government defense policy is not about what it does with its military forces during its tenure, rather, defense policy should define the military capabilities to acquire, maintain orderliness and protect the sovereignty of the country against any internal and external threat.

Philosophy and objectives of National Defense policy in Nigeria.

The Nigeria national defense policy idea and objectives defense policy 2006 provides the theoretical basis of the national defense policy as “to guarantee national security, and, threat by deterring external threats and aggression”, and, the primary concern is to avoid war through diplomacy and deterrence. The nation will ensure that armed forces possess the capability to successfully defend the Nigerian territory and her people. The philosophy comprises of:

- i. The Nigerian state is paramount and is the guarantor of the security and well-being of the people;
- ii. The Nigerian state is an important player in international politics, particularly in Africa; hence certain responsibilities are expected from her;
- iii. The armed forces are the most critical instrument of Nigeria in the discharge of her responsibilities, at both domestic and international levels;
- iv. The security of the state is the primary focus of the defense policy (National Defense Policy document, 2006: 4,9, and 12).

The idea of the policy serves as the driving force behind Nigeria defense policy, with aim to protect her sovereign national interests, as provided in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 constitution; and therefore, shapes her defense policy objectives which include among others, followings:

- i. Protection of Nigeria’s sovereignty, citizens, values, cultures, interests, resources, and territory against external threats;
- ii. Provision of defense as well as strategic advice and information to the government;
- iii. Promotion of security consciousness among Nigerians;
- iv. Participation in disaster management and humanitarian relief operations at home and abroad;
- v. Ensuring security and stability in the West African sub region through collective security;
- vi. Participation in bi-lateral and multi-lateral operations; and
- vii. Contributing to international peace and security (National Defense Policy document, 2006: 22-23).

Banditry

Banditry is a hybrid form of organized crime and violent disruption that destabilizes both rural livelihoods and state sovereignty. Chris and Hussein (2015), opined banditry to the practice of stealing cattle and animals from herders or the raiding of animals or cattle from the ranches. According to Samuel. (2015). Banditry is also most commonly associated or accompanied with kidnappings, rape, organised attacks on villages and communities, as well as acts of thuggery, extortion and looting. Contrarily, according to Olapeju and Peter (2021), explained from historical view, that bandits in Europe and America were seen as fighters for liberation. The African contexts largely viewed banditry entwined with violence, including cattle rustling and rampant destruction of property. In recent years, rural banditry in Nigeria has escalated, leading to widespread trauma, loss of lives, forced displacement, and monumental devastation across various states, notably marked by massacres using sophisticated weapons (Rosenje et al., 2022).

In Northern Nigeria, banditry has become an entrenched security challenge involving cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, destruction of farmlands, and violent attacks on rural communities (Okoli and Ugwu, 2021). Intellectuals noted in Nigeria that, the phenomenon has moved beyond petty robbery to large-scale violence, with armed groups capable of challenging state authority in parts of Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Niger, Kogi, Benue and Nasarawa States. (Yahaya and Abdulazeez, 2023). Saleh as cited by Egwu has stated that banditry involves cattle rustling which is the stealing of cattle from herders or entire households with the use of arms. This breeds conflicts and social insecurity especially between herders and farmers.

Empirical Reviews

Abdussalam et al. (2022) conducted a recent study focusing on the socio-economic impacts of banditry across multiple states in Nigeria, shedding light on the pervasive nature of this security challenge which had disrupted economic growth of the rural areas within many local governments in the northern region. Kitabu, (2023) observed that, banditry in recent times, has inflicted severe socio-economic consequences across various regions. Incidents of bandit attacks on travelers, villages, and even state officials have left many dead, injured, or kidnapped, leading to substantial disruptions along major transportation routes.

Recently, according to Abubakar Akote in Daily Trust on line Newspaper of 5th January, 2026 captioned. “Close to 60 people were killed in an attack at the Kasuwan Daji market, Borgu local government area, Niger state”. Also, the reporter on 14th February, 2026, reported, “Bandits kill 32 farmers, abducts many, set houses ablaze in a series of attacks in Tugan-Makari, Konsoko, and Pissa communities in Borgu local government area of Niger state”. In related ugly event, Saheed oyelakin of Punch newspaper on line of 4th January, 2026 with a captioned. “30 killed, many abducted in bandit attack on Niger market”. The story according to the reporter narrated, “armed men suspected to be marauding bandits operating from Kainji lake national park have attacked a village market in Kabe District, Borgu local government area of Niger state, setting ablaze houses, killing 30 villagers, and abducting scores”.

In addition, the surge kidnapping cases, especially in regions like the Southeast and Southwest, has led to closures of businesses as ransom demands affect business operations and prompt relocations to safer regions. (Muhammad and Hussain, 2021). Relatively, banditry in form of kidnap for ransom, armed robbery and village/market raids, among others, had affected business activities in various parts of the affected states in Nigeria’s Northwest. Bandits’ attacks on pastoralists, farmers, travelers, and businessmen have disrupted economic and agricultural activities. (Shalangwa, 2013). This action has inflicted severe socio-economic disadvantages to many states and local government in the regions specifically, Borgu local government, Niger state.

Weighing the consequence of banditry attacks on educational programs in the north west, east and central regions. According to Ebonine (2022) that, banditry attacks on educational and socio-economic development in Northern regions, pigeonholed the nexus between banditry and rentierism. The scholar concluded that, the rising menace of banditry in the Northern Nigeria has the mission of annihilating western education which would further set the region on the track on educational backwardness and form the catalyst for Islamization. Relatively, in 2019 report by the Zamfara state government, between 2011 and 2019, bandits have killed at least 6,319 people, kidnapped 3,672 people and burnt more than 500 villages in Zamfara State alone. In the past few months, more than 800 children have been kidnapped in mass abductions at four boarding schools in Northwest Nigeria (Brenner, 2021). Also, Vanguard newspaper on line of 24th November, 2025. Authored by Kingsley *et al* reported on the abduction of more than 300 pupils students and staff of St. Marys Catholic School, Papiri communities in Agwara and Borgu local government area of Niger state. In related event reported by Sonia *et al* of Vanguard newspaper on line of 4th January, 2026, captioned “Two different suspected bandits attacked on communities in Agwara and Kasuwan Daji.” “Over 30 residents were killed in Agwara, including children, and abducting scores of others as confirmed by state police command in Minna. At the same time, another 37 persons were killed in Kasuwan Daji near Papiri, while others gunned down in Kaima Village, with several residents, including children, abducted in Borgu local government area. These heinous activities committed by the armed bandits discouraged parents of sending their children to schools, thereby, leading to closure of all schools in Niger state.

Measuring National Defense Policy implementation on incessant banditry attack in North Central, Nigeria.

The performances of the National defense policy since its implementation mainly have achieved success and failure. The ministry of defense information Unit (2022) declared that national defense policy actions on crisis management in Nigeria since independence have maintained its purpose of existence on guaranteeing national security, and, threat by deterring external threats and aggression.

The unit affirmed on tactics employed by the Nigerian military in internal security are informed in the national defense policy by three basic considerations; the principle of the use of minimum force; enemy equipment holding, his operational methods and habits; and the topography of the enemy’s location. With the re-engineering of the security architecture, the acquisition of more platforms, mobile platforms, and technology for resolving social problem of banditry.

The implementation of the defense policy through many strategies and joint operation among the Nigerian military forces of, the Military, Navy and Airforce employing both kinetic and non-kinetic tactics to dismantle and kill the terrorist hideouts. Akinola, (2022), revealed that, one important strategic approach has been the launch of specialized military operations such as operation Hadarin Daji, Thunder Strike, and Sahel Sanity to dismantle and demolish bandit enclaves, rescue abducted victims, and restore civil authority in affected communities. Okoli and Ugwu, (2023), added that, the joint operation of other paramilitary agency with

military killed many armed bandits in the North Central, Nigeria. Similarly, major bandit commanders such as Halilu Sububu and Malam Sale were reportedly eliminated in 2024 by accurate airstrikes that damaged criminal networks' command and control systems (Premium Times, 2025; West Africa Report, 2024). In addition, according to Arise Television on January 24th, 2025, broadcast that, Nigeria Airforce airstrike dismantles bandits enclave and neutralizing scores of the terrorist. In a related development, the British Broadcasting Corporation on line, reported in January 13th, 2026. By Chris Ekwor that, more than 200 suspected members of an armed gang in central Nigeria have been killed by the Nigeria Armed forces in an ongoing operation. These successful operations not only disrupted the bandits activities but also weakened their 45rganizational structure, making it more difficult for them to regroup and launch attacks. The Nigerian Army's efforts in targeting key leaders and seizing weapons have been crucial in the ongoing fight against banditry in the region.

The adverse views on national defense policy implementation on achieving a secure society also varied in their effectiveness majorly on their weak response to incessant banditry attack in the north central regions. The International Crisis Group, (2023). Emphasise that, despite efforts such as increased military presence and community policing initiatives, banditry challenges within the area persist due to slow response to emergency, porous borders, inadequate military hardware infrastructure, poor motivation, inadequate military personnel. Amitav, (2004), asserted that there is a growing poor counter responses to the bandits terror activities in the north central. According Kabiru Adamu, managing director of Beacon Security and Intelligence limited in on line Punch Newspaper of October 20th, 2024. Noted that, "weak security infrastructure including ineffective law enforcement response to crime, and, inadequate security measures allow criminals to continue kidnapping. As long as the deterrent (security agents) elements remains weak and they can collect and spend ransom without restrictions these crimes will persist". The national defense policy have failed to perform credibly well on protecting the sovereignty of the country against past and recent terrorists attack in different parts of the country. (Francis, 2019). The lack of addressing and implementing human capital building in national defense policy demotivate the military personnel in the fight against bandits in Nigeria. Poor human capacity building faced by the military personnel devalue their level of exposure to modern training. Mmanti, (2022) declared that "without the right succession planning put to play in human resources, we build for the future without a future."

Statistics of incessant Banditry attacks in Borgu local government 2025-2026

Date/year	Location	No of people killed	No of people kidnapped	No of people Injured
19 th Aug, 2025	Malami, Safuluna		4	
2 nd Nov, 2025	Gidan Guda	3	1	
24 th Nov, 2025.	St Marys Catholic School, Papiri Agwara.	1	300	17
14 th Feb, 2026. Tugan-Makari,	Tugan-Makari, Konsoko, and Pissa	32		
4 th Jan, 2026.	Agwara, Kasuwan Kabe District, Borgu	30	56	
4 th Jan, 2026.	Kaima Village, Borgu.	37		
5 th Jan, 2026.	Kasuwan Daji market	60		

Source: Researcher Survey, 2026

III. CONCLUSION

From the discussion, the study established the outcome assessment of the national defense policy on incessant banditry attack, specifically in Borgu local government area in Niger state. The study reviewed the existing Nigeria national defense policy 2016, on national security, and effort of the military personnel in crushing terrorist activities, specifically, on banditry attacks in the north central. The study established how the banditry evil activities disrupted the educational programs in Borgu local government leading to the Niger state government announcement on closing down of all schools in Niger state. Also, there is total economic collapse, displaced communities, and deepened humanitarian crises across the local government. Though, against all odds, the armed forces comprise of the Military, Airforce and the Navy recorded some positive achievement in the fight against the armed bandits in the state.

Recommendations

Accordingly, the paper calls for a revisit of the current Nigerian National Defense Policy (2006) in line with the following recommendations:

Joint corporation between the armed forces and other security agencies come together in policy design and implementation process. In practice, Ministry of defense in collaboration with other security agencies adopt a uniform approach forming all-inclusive security policy plans. This will help the defense ministry a more effective approach to implementing of national defense policy with other security agencies.

The rigid section or part of the defense policy that contributes to military slow response to emergency situation due to “who give or receive order” among the military hierarchy should be review in meeting modern global best practice.

The policy should address the significance on provision of modern military hardware whenever the need arises. The ministry of defense, in short term plans, purchase of sophisticated military hardware in needed to confronts the bandits, while the National Defense Company (NIDCOM) should be adequately fund for manufacturing and fabrication of the military hardware for the long term plans.

Training, development and promotion of the military personnel should be suitably instituted in the national defense policy and hundred percent implement. This will enhance morale of the military, decrease lack of purpose, increased sense of belonging among the armed forces of the military, airforce and navy who partake in field combat battle against the armed banditry attacks in Borgu local government, Niger state.

In addition, fast technological development should be given priority. The ministry of defense, in partnership with the ministry of science and technology, conduct survey to determine the available capacity to identify critical and sensitive areas. This approach will develop a fast and high-level technical manpower program for the selected offices and institutions.

Lastly, the ministry of defense should embrace the re-evaluation of the security architecture. This include creating new strategies ideas aligning with modern practice and incorporate into subsequent national defense policy.

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