



Article

An Assessment of The Role of Operation Sharan Daji in Combating Rural Banditry in Northern Senatorial Zone of Zamfara State (2015-2019)

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Abdulnasir UMAR
Department of Political Science,
Federal University Gusau,
Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Yakubu HARUNA Ja'e
Department of Political Science,
Kaduna State University,
Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Ahmed BUBA
Department of Political Science,
Kaduna State University,
Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Abdulkarim GARBA
Department of Economics,
Kaduna State University,
Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Abstract

The problem of rural banditry necessitated the establishment of Operation Sharan Daji in 2015 by the Federal Government of Nigeria with the mandate to rid Zamfara and other neighbouring states of banditry. Despite this innovative security measure, the northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state seems not to be recording a meaningful drop in the rate of banditry, hence the need for empirical verification. This study therefore, assessed the role of Operation Sharan Daji in combating rural banditry in the northern senatorial zone of Zamfara State 2015-2019. Structural functionalism theory was adopted as a theoretical framework. Questionnaires and in-depth interviews were used to generate primary data. Findings reveal generally that despite the increase in the rate of banditry as a result of the challenges faced by Operation Sharan Daji, the operation had done its best to live up to its mandate of combating rural banditry in the northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state, as it has been assessed to be effective by the residents of the area. Hence, it is recommended that government at all levels show strong commitment by channelling more attention and resources to put an end to the menace of rural banditry.

Keywords:

Operation Sharan Daji, Rural Banditry, Zamfara State, Northern Senatorial Zone.

Introduction

Internal security operations constitute an important global phenomenon in world-system. It is widely believed that national security is premised on national interest as well as strategic calculations within regions with mutual security interest in the global arena. Today, international conflicts and crises of

Corresponding Author:

Abdulnasir Umar, Department of Political Science, Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State, Nigeria.
Email: abdulnasirumar@fugusau.edu.ng

various shapes and proportions has remained an intractable and unpredictable issue of global concern, regardless of various efforts by the United Nations in maintaining and managing international peace and security. Experiences from developed countries and other developing countries in Middle East, as well as emerging democracies in Africa and the Latin American countries had proved that ruthless and unhealthy competition over issues of legitimacy, autonomy and sovereignty can threaten internal security of nations.

The Nigeria state has indeed witnessed a lot of internal security challenges and threats that badly seems to challenge and overwhelmed its security system and sovereignty in recent decades. These security threats are said to be largely driven by neglectful leadership that characterized the nation at all levels. Prominent amongst these security threats engulfing the nation include; organized killings and communal clashes, Boko Haram insurgency, oil theft and pipeline vandalism in the Niger-Delta, secessionist threats, electoral violence, farmers-herders clashes, ethno-religious crises, kidnapping, cattle rustling and rural banditry. The military has been deployed to complement the police and other civil authorities to stem these rising internal security threats in Nigeria since they assumed currency and characteristically held the nation at its jugular. The high level of internal security threats in recent times, have reinforced the urgent need to deploy the military to maintain peace and order. This move notwithstanding the exigencies that necessitated it is not without its challenges.

In recent times, the north western part of Nigeria has been badly afflicted with the worrying scourge of rural banditry that has left the region restive and hard-pressed by insecurity and widespread killings and kidnapping for ransom. The region is one of the six geopolitical zones of the Nigerian state which all together, encompasses seven states namely; Kano, Jigawa, Katsina, Kaduna, Zamfara, Sokoto and Kebbi. Five of these states, which are Katsina, Kaduna, Zamfara, Sokoto and Kebbi, have been mostly affected by violent rural banditry.

Zamfara state in the last decade has been bedevilled by the rising incidents of cattle rustling and rural banditry. Rural banditry has become a major problem in Zamfara state in the past years and has continually become a regular feature in the state. The outcome of the activities of the bandits is usually unimaginable and occasionally attended by needless harvest of deaths and destruction of economic goods. Hundreds of lives and properties worth billions of naira have been reportedly lost and destroyed in the state.

Rural banditry and cattle rustling have persisted despite sustain efforts by the Nigerian state to put an end to its deadly activities. The Nigerian Police, for example, have constituted a Task Force on Cattle Rustling and Associated Crimes, saddled with the responsibility for pre-emptive intelligence gathering, anti-cattle rustling action and prevention of associated crimes. The task force is also saddled with responsibility of investigating and prosecuting criminals involved in cattle rustling and associated crimes involving rural banditry and others. Other initiatives designed to address the menace of cattle rustling and associated banditry includes a proposed bill to establish a Federal Commission to cater for and manage Transhumant Stock Routes and Grazing Reserve Areas amongst others (Egwu, 2016).

In containing the rising tide of banditry in Zamfara and other neighbouring states, a military operation code named "Operation *Sharan Daji*" (which literally translates to operation clearing the bushes), was launched to check the menace of rural banditry and cattle rustling. Despite the launching of the Operation *Sharan Daji* to combat rural banditry, the frequency of bandits' attacks, the intensity of the conflicts, and the associated loss of lives and properties occasioned by such attacks particularly in parts of Zamfara state, has remained on the increase. It is against this backdrop that this research seeks to make an assessment of the role of Operation *Sharan Daji* in combating rural banditry in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state from 2015 to 2019.

Statement of the Research Problem

Rural banditry is one of the major threats undermining the peace and security of the Nigerian state. It is usually accompanied with killings, wanton destruction of properties, looting, assaults, kidnapping and cattle rustling. Zamfara state in the last decade has been bedevilled by the rising incidents of cattle rustling and rural banditry. Rural banditry has become a major problem in Zamfara state. The outcome of this criminality which is bloody has always claimed thousands of lives with properties worth billions of naira destroyed in the process. According to a report by Vanguard (2021), Zamfara state in the last six months of the year 2021 has remained a beehive of killings and kidnappings on account of banditry and war against the bandits by the security agencies. Vanguard's tally and data obtained from the Nigeria Security Tracker, NST, a project of the Council on Foreign Relations' Africa Programme, showed that no fewer than 345 persons were killed in the state between September 2020 and February 2021. Within the period, no fewer than 468 persons including women, children and school girls were abducted by the bandits. On the average, this indicates that Zamfara records 58 deaths and 78 abducted monthly. Of the state's 14 local councils, only Gusau, the capital city, and Bukkuyum, have been spared of the killings and abductions so far. The most affected local councils are Maru, Talata-Mafara, Maradun, Kaura-Namoda, Shinkafi, Zurmi and Bungudu.

In containing the rising tide of banditry in Zamfara and other neighbouring states, a military operation code named Operation *Sharan Daji* was launched in 2015 by the Federal Government of Nigeria as its primary responsibility in securing the country, with the mandate to bring to an end the menace of rural banditry in Zamfara and other neighbouring states. The operation was conducted simultaneously and in collaboration with other security agencies and local vigilante, and supervised by the Defence Headquarters (DHQ); with its headquarters domiciled in Gusau the capital of Zamfara state. Despite this integrated security measure, the problem of banditry in Zamfara state seems to be on the increase, with the criminals still actively operating without let or hindrance. The problem of rural banditry in Zamfara state seems to dangerously persist despite the establishment of Operation *Sharan Daji* hence, the need to interrogate and investigate the effectiveness of Operation *Sharan Daji* in combating rural banditry. This dissertation therefore would interrogate the operation of Operation *Sharan Daji* to see if it could resolve the problem or not.

Research Questions

Based on the critical issues raised in the background to study and the statement of the research problem, the following questions guided our study:

- i. What is the role of the Operation *Sharan Daji* in combating rural banditry in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state from 2015 to 2019?
- ii. What are the operational strategies of Operation *Sharan Daji* in combating rural banditry in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state from 2015 to 2019?
- iii. To what extent has the introduction of Operation *Sharan Daji* helped in addressing the problem of rural banditry in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state from 2015 to 2019?
- iv. What are the challenges that militated against the effective functioning of Operation *Sharan Daji* in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state from 2015 to 2019?

Literature Review

Banditry has a long history dating back from ancient Greece, Rome, and China. In central and eastern Europe and in the Balkans, it was found in the countryside, in specific conditions (such as following wars and massive dislocations) and in specific periods, especially in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the modern nation-state was emerging. In Latin America, for example, it was part and

parcel of an expanding frontier economy. Banditry tended to emerge in remote, difficult-to-control mountainous areas containing large numbers of semi mobile and state-resistant pastoralists. Although there are examples of lone bandits, bandits tended to form into fluid bands, sometimes of up to twenty persons. Kinship, real or fictive, was an important component of their organization, and solidarity was reinforced through the institutions of blood brotherhood and adoption, as well as through feasting and other rituals. Banditry in this sense, can be viewed as a continuum from the camel raiding Bedouin, through the "noble bandits" of the nineteenth-century Greek Klephts, to contemporary armed autonomist groups (such as Chiapas in Mexico or Kurds in Turkey or Chechen fighters against Russian intervention in Chechnya). These were labelled as "bandits" by the state due to their guerrilla strategy of raiding and looting animals and properties (Cassia, 2018).

In Africa, the incidence of armed banditry and cattle rustling seem to be more rampant along the Eastern sub region of (Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somali), than the rest of the sub regions. This tends to explain why much of the literature available on these phenomena comes from scholars mostly within and around these regions. According to Mburu (1999), who is a leading authority in this area of research:

The available literature on the Horn of Africa focuses mostly on social banditry in the 19th century whose motive as noted by Crummey (1986:133-144), was to protest against centralism of authority. Further, traditional banditry has been explored as a vocation where individuals waged war against greedy village chiefs or the political unit on behalf of the local community while living in the forest as hermits until justice was exacted.

In his study of act of banditry in the Horn of Africa, Mburu (1999) observed that even though banditry can be caused by economic and political instability and imbalances within the State system, it still remains the epitome of a wider phenomenon where there is a symmetrical relationship between poverty, political instability, and general lawlessness. He thus identified four categories of bandits which he dubbed as "bandits' families ", as follows ;(Kafagne, Faloul, Ngoroko, and the Shifta). He further argued that they exist along the border regions of each state of the Horn of Africa whose motive, means and opportunity for lawlessness have been traced to proxy wars and civil unrest that started during the Cold War. He also identified ecological factor as having a disastrous effect on pastoral economy making lawlessness an alternative means of survival in those restive regions of the horn of Africa. Notwithstanding, banditry is sustained by weapons that are rapidly spreading into the area and the continued insulation of certain regions from within by their states and by the international community. He also observed that banditry had transmuted from what he called 'innocuous tribal sport' into one of terrorism perpetrated by hardened former guerilla fighters that were used to killing and having little respect for the laws of the land, or any constituted authority.

Rural banditry in Nigeria has a long history dating back to as far as the pre-colonial period. In his study of armed banditry in Borgu, Akinwumi noted that, in pre-colonial Borgu in Kwara state, Nigeria, 'Bakin Jaki', one of the notorious raiders in the nineteenth century, had a gang made up of about 400 robbers on foot and 60 horsemen. When they attacked, they did so to loot the traders of their goods. They even captured the traders who they later sold into slavery. The weapons of attack are the horses, spears, bows and poisoned arrows. This affected the main source of Borgu's economy, the caravan trade, and consequently led to the fall of many of the Borgu pre-colonial states (Shalangwa 2013 cited Akinwumi 1994).

In recent times, armed banditry has taken a dangerous dimension and been discovered to be perpetrated in homes, workplaces, schools, banks, highways and neighbourhoods. It now appears to be concentrated in towns, cities, urban centres and major highways. Although banditry is said to operate mainly in difficult terrains like the hills and bushes, along major highways and bush paths, and between villages, but recent developments has saw a dangerous extension of act banditry to urban areas. Although bandits

have no fixed station of their operations, as they attack villages and towns and razed them at will, rustled livestock like cows and displaced vulnerable villagers (Shalangwa, 2013).

According to Okoli and Ugwu (2019) in their work "Of Marauders and Brigands: Scoping the Threat of Rural Banditry in Nigeria's North West", observed that the menace of rural banditry in northwestern Nigeria has asymmetrically threatened the region to a dangerous degree. They argued banditry has attained a level that now rivalled Boko Haram insurgency in terms of lethality and humanitarian consequences; and assuming a state they describe as "complex emergency", surpassing the Boko Haram attacks. The tragedy of the situation is that the criminality obtains an organic socio-existential context that makes it not only burgeoning in scope but also pervasive in its pattern of operation. It has badly spread to most of the states of the northwestern region, with ripples effects in the north-central region. Apart from the attendant loss of lives and the destruction of properties, the crisis has engendered frosty inter-group relations in the affected areas (Okoli and Ugwu, 2019).

The history of cattle rustling and armed banditry in Zamfara started since around 2009 but it assumed a new dimension in 2011 especially after the general elections. The causes of these unending conflicts are many even though people differ on causes to a varying extent. While many links the scenario to long term human conflicts between Fulani herders and farmers due to struggle of ownership of farm land and grazing areas, others see it as direct effect of reaction against socio-political and economic marginalization of the Fulani by their Hausa counterpart. These acts of cattle rustling and armed banditry has wreaked havoc and state of fear among the residents of the states. The miscreants who take advantage of the terrain of some of these areas rustled hundreds of thousands of cattle and other valuables as well as killed scores of people (Anka, 2017). If socio-political and economic marginalization of the Fulani by their Hausa counter parts was the reason behind the menace of rural banditry in Zamfara state, then how would one explain the activities of bandits in other states of the federation like Niger and Kaduna state? I believe the issue of banditry has gone beyond marginalization of one ethnic group by another. There is more to it than that. The negligence of rural areas with limited state presence creates an enabling environment for rural banditry to thrive. It further demonstrates that governance failure in these regions facilitates the illegal flow of Small and light Weapons Arms (SLWA)

Rufa'i (2021) in his work 'I am a Bandit': A Decade of Research on Armed Banditry in Zamfara State Bandit's Den posited that contemporary rural banditry started in Zamfara around 2011, as a traditional farmer-herder conflict or insignificant rural unrest, transforming into full-blown conflict, spilling over to most parts of the Northwest. Many factors account for the transformation of this conflict which includes traditional rulers, politicians, security agencies, gold miners amongst others. The first criminal gang was formed by Kundu, and Buharin Daji. It grew from a single cell, mainly in operating in Zamfara in 2011, to over one hundred and twenty (120) gangs across six states in 2021. The common feature of these gangs are mass killing of innocent people, cattle rustling, kidnapping, gender based and sexual violence (GBSV) and other related human rights abuses. At the beginning they lived in the woods and mountainous areas, from where they unleashed terror on the rural and urban areas in the states. Some of the bandits have become very daring to the extent of operating from their respective villages. Approximately, there are over 10,000 armed bandits operating across different parts of Zamfara state. About 120 villages destroyed while 50,000 people were either internally displaced or made refugees in the neighboring Niger Republic. Since the outbreak of this violence, several measures were put in place to curb it, by both the state and non-state actors, but with little or no success.

Competition over access to mineral resource deposits in Katsina and Zamfara states has been reported to also exacerbate the already-existing crises of banditry, as various factions were said to have cash into it. Often terror groups control the minefields and are able to act with impunity because of the undue patronage they benefit from the authorities through connivance. The syndicates are also accused of secretly funding banditry and cattle rustling in mining communities, to conflate attention from their activities which are presumed to be illegal and exploitative (Ojewale, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted for the study is the structural functional theory. The structural functionalism, or simply functionalism in other contexts, is a broad perspective in sociology and anthropology which seeks to interpret society as a structure with interrelated parts. Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements; namely norms, customs, traditions and institutions. A common analogy, popularized by Herbert Spencer, presents these parts of society as "organs" that work toward the proper functioning of the "body" as a whole (John, 2000). In the most basic terms, it simply emphasizes "the effort to impute, as rigorously as possible, to each feature, custom, or practice, its effect on the functioning of a supposedly stable, cohesive system (Bourricaud, ND). For Talcott Parsons, "functionalism" came to describe a particular stage in the methodological development of social science, rather than a specific school of thought (Parsons, 1975).

The theory is relevant to this study by virtue of its theoretical construct that emphasis on the analysis of the functions of institutions. By identifying and understanding the functions of these institutions in a political system, it enables one to be able to understand the positive roles they play in the maintenance of social order and control.

The theory throws light on the success and failure of the political system which is important in interrogating the functions of the military as it relates to the study. Deducing from the assumptions of the theory which places the survival of the political system on the proper functioning and operations of the inter-related parts, it can be justified from the theoretical constructs that the failure or success of the military operations in maintaining peace and stability in Zamfara lies in how the military functions in prosecuting the war. This function can either be strengthened by proper funding and effective command structure or compromised by corruption and weak command structure, depending on how the military institution is programmed. However, the overall importance of the theory as used in the study is to provide better explanation on the role of the Operation *Sharan Daji* in fighting rural banditry in Zamfara state and the function of the military arm of the state as it relates to providing internal security in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state. The theory also offers explanation on the function of the military arm of the state, in providing internal security and to assist the state in taking informed decisions at both the strategic and operational levels with regards to the need to undertake security operations in Nigeria.

In spite of the relevance of the theory in providing insightful theoretical constructs to the study, it has been criticized for being unable to account for social change. The theory has been said to be teleological. In other words, it attempts to describe social institution solely through their effects and does not explain causes of these effects (Nte, 2013). The structural functional approach contains within it, several inherent biases or normative implications. First, it is by its very nature conservative: it recognizes that a political system's first objective is to ensure its own survival. For this reason, it is not especially responsive to innovations and movements aimed at political change, that is beyond those that strengthen its adaptiveness and resilience. It also has a democratic and participatory bias as it views citizen input and involvement in the political process as the surest route to political stability and responsiveness (London, 2021). The theory is Eurocentric and as such cannot fully explain the role of the Nigerian military in combating rural banditry in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state.

Method of Data Collection

To achieve the objectives of this research, the study relies on both primary and secondary types of data. In sourcing for primary data, mixed methods approach was adopted which is a combination of both quantitative and qualitative approach. The justification for using the mixed methods was to offset the weaknesses inherent within one method with the strengths of the other and to also use the strength of one to add to the strength of the other. For the quantitative approach, survey questionnaires were used and for the qualitative approach, in-depth interview was used. In sourcing for the secondary data, books, conferences and seminar papers, internet and journal articles and newspapers were used.

Method of Data Analysis

This section of the study would detail the results derive from the field data exercise. The data collected through questionnaire was analysed using descriptive statistical model with the aids of frequency/percentage distribution tables. The quantitative data were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 23.0 using frequency tables generated for analysis. Qualitative data gathered through interview were transcribed and responses were presented and thematically analysed.

Location and Population of the Study

The study was conducted in Zamfara state, northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state to be precise. Zamfara state is a state in northwestern Nigeria, its capital is Gusau. Zamfara State is mainly populated by Hausa and Fulani people. The northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state is among the three senatorial zones that made up of Zamfara state. The other senatorial zones are central and western senatorial zones. It is made up of four Local Government Areas which are; Birnin Magaji, Shinkafi, Kaura Namoda, and Zurmi. The northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state covers an area of 5,564 km². Agriculture is the main occupation of the people and the central source of income. It is surrounded by many forests like the Sububu and Dumburum forests. The choice of northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state as a case study is premised on the fact that northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state is the worst hit by the menace of rural banditry between the periods under study. The period 2015 to 2019 was chosen because it was the period in which the problem of banditry was at its peak.

The population of the study covered the entire population of northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state, which has a population of (889,292), eight hundred and eighty-nine thousand, and two hundred and ninety-two people according to 2006 national population census.

Sample Size

In order to determine the sample size of the entire population of northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state which consists of four local government areas, the study adopts Taro Yamane's method for sample size calculation as formulated by the statistician, Taro Yamane in 1967 to determine the sample size from a given population. The sample size for this study is 400. This was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula for determining sample size as follows

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$1 + N(e)^2$$

Where:

n= Sample size

N= Total number of the population

1= Constant

e²= Margin of error

∴

$$n = \frac{889,292}{1 + 889,292 \times 0.05^2}$$

$$= \frac{889,292}{1 + 889,292 \times 0.05^2}$$

$$= 889,292$$

$$1+889,292 \times 0.0025$$

$$= 889,292$$

$$1+2223.23$$

$$= 889292$$

$$2224.23$$

$$= 400$$

Data Analysis

Demographic Information of Respondents

The demographic information of the respondents comprises of sex, age, marital status, occupation/profession and educational qualification.

Table 1.1 Gender

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	294	76.2	76.2	76.2
Female	92	23.8	23.8	100.0
Total	386	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July 2021

The table above shows 294 respondents representing 76.2 % are males while 92 respondents representing 23.8 % are females. Analysis in this table shows that majority of the respondents in the study area are males. However, it implies that both the male and female genders were represented in the sample considering the importance of generating data from both genders in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state as both genders are at the receiving end of the menace of rural banditry in the area.

Table 1.2 Ages of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 18-28years	115	29.8	29.8	29.8
28-38years	191	49.5	49.5	79.3
38-48years	50	13.0	13.0	92.2
48 years and above	30	7.8	7.8	100.0
Total	386	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July 2021

The table above shows that 191 respondents representing 49.5% are within the age 28-38years, 115 respondents representing 29.8% are within the age bracket 18-28years, 50 respondents representing 13% are within the age 38-48years while 30 respondents representing 7.8% are 48 years and above. Analysis in the table shows that majority of the respondents are within the age 28years to 38years signifying a youthful respondent as such knowledgeable of the topic under study. However, the analysis in the table also implies that respondents of this study were drawn from all categories of adult population of northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state.

Table 1.3 Respondents view on the role(s) of Operation *Sharan Daji*

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Combating rural banditry	165	42.7	42.7	42.7
Protecting lives and properties	91	23.6	23.6	66.3
Arresting and handing over arrested bandits to police	30	7.8	7.8	74.1
All of the above	82	21.2	21.2	95.3
None of the above	18	4.7	4.7	100.0
Total	386	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July 2021

The table above shows that 165 respondents representing 42.7% said the role of Operation *Sharan Daji* is to combat rural banditry, 91 respondents representing 23.6% said their role is protect lives and properties, 30 respondents representing 7.8% said their role is to arrest and hand over bandits to the police and 82 respondents representing 21.2% said their role is to combat rural banditry, protecting lives and properties and arresting bandits while 18 respondents representing 4.7% said none of the above. Analysis in the table revealed that the major role of Operation *Sharan Daji* according to the respondents is to combat rural banditry.

Table 1.4 Respondents view on the rate of rural banditry after the creation of Operation *Sharan Daji*

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid On the increase	198	51.3	51.3	51.3
On the decrease	157	40.7	40.7	92.0
No idea	31	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	386	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July 2021

The table above shows that 198 respondents representing 51.3% said rural banditry is on the increase while 157 respondents representing 40.7% said rural banditry is on the decrease. However, 31 respondents representing 8% had no idea on the rate of rural banditry in the study area. Analysis in the table therefore shows that rural banditry is on the increase in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state after the creation of Operation *Sharan Daji*.

Table 1.5 Respondents view on whether the coming into existence of Operation *Sharan Daji* has increased the risk for bandits thereby limiting their desire to commit crime

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	208	53.9	53.9	53.9
No	150	38.9	38.9	92.7
No idea	28	7.3	7.3	100.0
Total	386	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July 2021

The table above shows that 208 respondents representing 53.9% believed that the coming into existence of Operation *Sharan Daji* has increased the risk for the bandits thereby limiting their desire to perpetrate crime, 150 respondents representing 38.9% said the coming in to existence of Operation *Sharan Daji* has done nothing to restrain the bandits from perpetrating crime while 28 respondents representing 7.3% had no idea on the subject. Analysis in the table shows that the coming into existence of Operation *Sharan Daji* has increased the risk for bandits thereby limiting their desire to commit crime in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state as agreed by majority of the respondents.

It implies that most of the respondents (53.9%) believe the coming into existence of Operation *Sharan Daji* has done some good to crime control in the area by maximizing the risk for intending bandits. According to the traditional ruler interviewed in Kaura Namoda, Operation *Sharan Daji* has combated rural banditry to the extent that there is reduction in banditry and the bandits are afraid to commit crime. The traditional ruler interviewed in Zurmi holds the opinion that personnel of the security outfit take the fight to the bandits in the bush (Interview, July 2021).

Table 1.6 Assessment of Operation *Sharan Daji* in combating rural banditry.

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Effective	235	60.9	60.9	60.9
Ineffective	135	35.0	35.0	95.9
No idea	16	4.1	4.1	100.0
Total	386	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July 2021

The table above shows that 235 respondents representing 60.9% said the activities of Operation *Sharan Daji* in combating rural banditry is effective, 135 respondents representing 35% said the activities of Operation *Sharan Daji* in combating rural banditry is ineffective while 16 respondents representing 4.1% had no idea on the performance of Operation *Sharan Daji* in combating rural banditry. Analysis in the

table shows that the activities of Operation *Sharan Daji* in combating rural banditry is effective in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state as agreed by majority of the respondents.

This implies that majority (60.9%) of the respondents believe Operation *Sharan Daji* is effective in its task of combating rural banditry in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state. This is largely confirmed by majority of the interviewees of this study who strongly believe that the coming into existence of Operation *Sharan Daji* in 2015 has impacted positively to some extent on cases of rural banditry. According to personnel of the Nigerian Police Force, Operation *Sharan Daji* has combated rural banditry to a large extent because the bandits are being eliminated. The security personnel go to the bandits' camps to eliminate them. He claimed that they are taking the fight to them (Dumburum forest, Sububu forest, Gidan Jaja) and all their bandits hide out and they win it. According to personnel of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Operation *Sharan Daji* has combated rural banditry to the extent that some of the bandits have repented. In fact, they use to go to operation with some of the repentant bandits. Another personnel of the Nigerian Army said as a result of the activities of Operation *Sharan Daji*, many bandits were caught, their weapons collected, some were killed and some detained (Interview, July 2021).

Table 1.7 Challenges that militated against the effective functioning of Operation *Sharan Daji* in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Proper cooperation from residents	26	6.7	6.7	6.7
Poor numerical strength	81	21.0	21.0	27.7
Difficult terrain	78	20.2	20.2	47.9
Inadequate modern warfare gadget	35	9.1	9.1	57.0
Slow response to distress calls due to poor road network	66	17.1	17.1	74.1
Lack of political will from the government	100	25.9	25.9	100.0
Total	386	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Work, July 2021

The table above shows that 100 respondents representing 25% believed lack of political will from the government was the major problem that hindered the effective functioning of Operation *Sharan Daji*. 81 respondents representing 21% said poor numerical strength, 78 respondents representing 20.2% said difficult terrain, 66 respondents representing 17.1% said slow response to distress call due to poor road network, 35 respondents representing 9.1% said inadequate modern warfare gadget while 26 respondents representing 6.7% said proper cooperation from residents. Analysis in the table shows that the major challenge that hindered the effective functioning of Operation *Sharan Daji* in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state is lack of political will from the government as majority of the respondents agreed to that.

According to one of the interviewees who headed one of the units of the operation, lack of political will from the government is largely responsible for the persistence of the menace of rural banditry. He believes that the politicians are not willing to end it. Another personnel of the Nigerian Army shares similar view. He believes lack of political will from side of the government is partly responsible for the persistence of

the menace of rural banditry. He gave an example that during elections they used to take ballot boxes to the affected areas but they have refused to take development there. Most of the bandits' areas are out of reach of the government as such they are under developed. One of the interviewees, Personnel of the Nigerian Air Force said all this banditry is politics. He claimed that they are being sponsored by politicians. If the bandits are apprehended, you won't know their whereabouts. Most of the bandits that were arrested used to say that they are being sponsored. He further posits that if the government is serious, this banditry can be brought to an end in a week (Interview, June 2021).

Discussion of Findings

From the foregoing presentation and analysis of relevant data on the subject under investigation, the following findings or deductions can be drawn:

The mandate/role of Operation *Sharan Daji* is to combat rural banditry in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state by identifying bandits' enclaves and destroying them as a way of ensuring the protection of lives and properties. In addition to that, they provide an enabling environment to the dwellers of northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state to go about their normal life, businesses, farming and animal rearing as they were doing before and as enshrined in the constitution (see table 1.3 above).

Operation *Sharan Daji* has combated rural banditry to the extent that the residence of the northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state feel more secured from the bandits than before the creation of Operation *Sharan Daji*. The presence of the security personnel has increased the risk for the bandits thereby limiting their desire to perpetrate crime (see table 1.5 above and excerpts from interview).

Lack of political will from the government appear to be the major challenge that affected the effective functioning of Operation *Sharan Daji*. In addition, sabotage from the military, security personnel, traditional rulers, residents of the area, poor numerical strength of Operation *Sharan Daji*, difficult terrain of the area, inadequate modern warfare gadgets, slow response to distress calls due to poor road network, influx of weapons due to our porous border were also revealed as the major challenges faced by the security outfit (see table 1.7 above and excerpts from interview).

Despite the increase in the rate of banditry even with the creation of Operation *Sharan Daji*, Operation *Sharan Daji* has been certified by residents of northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state to be effective in the fight against banditry (see table 1.6 above and excerpts from interview) as it has been able to impact positively in the fight against banditry in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state to the extent that it has increased the risk for the bandits thereby limiting their desire to commit crime in the area.

Deducible from these findings therefore is the revelation that despite the increase in the rate of banditry as a result of the challenges faced by Operation *Sharan Daji* such as lack of political will from the government, sabotage from the military and other security personnel, traditional rulers, residents of the area, poor numerical strength of Operation *Sharan Daji*, difficult terrain of the area, inadequate modern warfare gadgets, slow response to distress calls due to poor road network, influx of weapons due to our porous border; Operation *Sharan Daji* had done its best to lived up to its mandate of combating rural banditry in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state as it has been assessed to be effective by the residents of the area.

Conclusion

Apart from discovering that the role of Operation *Sharan Daji* is to combat the menace of rural banditry in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state by identifying bandits enclaves and destroying them through collaboration by security agencies and local vigilante as a way of ensuring the protection of lives and properties, the introduction of Operation *Sharan Daji* has played a major role in the fight against banditry in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state. It is clear from the foregoing that this study has confirmed that Operation *Sharan Daji* has played a vital role in the fight against banditry in northern senatorial zone

of Zamfara state from 2015 to 2019 and residents of the area feel more secured now than before, hence their expression of some level of satisfaction with the impact of the security outfit.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of this study, it shows that for Operation *Sharan Daji* to impact better in the fight against banditry in northern senatorial zone of Zamfara state, government must show strong commitment to bring an end to the menace of rural banditry and channel more resources towards the functioning of the outfit. In the light of this, the following recommendations are proffered:

Government at all level must show strong commitment by channelling more attention and resources to bring an end to the menace of rural banditry.

Arising from the strategic neglect of rural communities in terms of socio-economic development, the rural communities also provide sites for the development of poorly managed forest reserves which provide cover and hideouts to the bandits. Therefore, government should address the issues of unemployment, poverty, neglect of the rural communities and social injustice with a view to improving the socio-economic conditions of the residents and, also reducing the tendency to turn to crime as an alternative to survival.

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Authors' Biographies

Abdulnasir Umar holds his BSc in Political Science from Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, his MSc in Political Science from Kaduna State University and he is currently a doctoral student at the Department of Political Science, Kaduna State University. He is currently a Lecturer at the Department of Political Science, Federal University Gusau.

Yakubu Haruna Ja'e holds his BSc in International Studies, MSc and PhD in Political Science from Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. He is currently a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Political Science, Kaduna State University. His area of specialization is International Relations and Security Studies.

Ahmed Buba holds his BSc in Political Science from Bayero University Kano, his MSc and PhD in Political Science from Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. He is currently an Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science, Kaduna State University. His area of specialization is Peace and Conflict Studies.

Abdulkarim Garba is currently a Lecturer at the Department of Economics, Faculty of Social Sciences, Kaduna State University, Kaduna state.