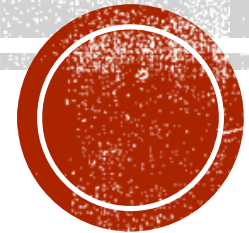


TIT-FOR-TAT VIOLENCE, COMMUNAL GRIEVANCES, AND THE BANDITRY CRISIS IN NORTHWEST NIGERIA

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KEY OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

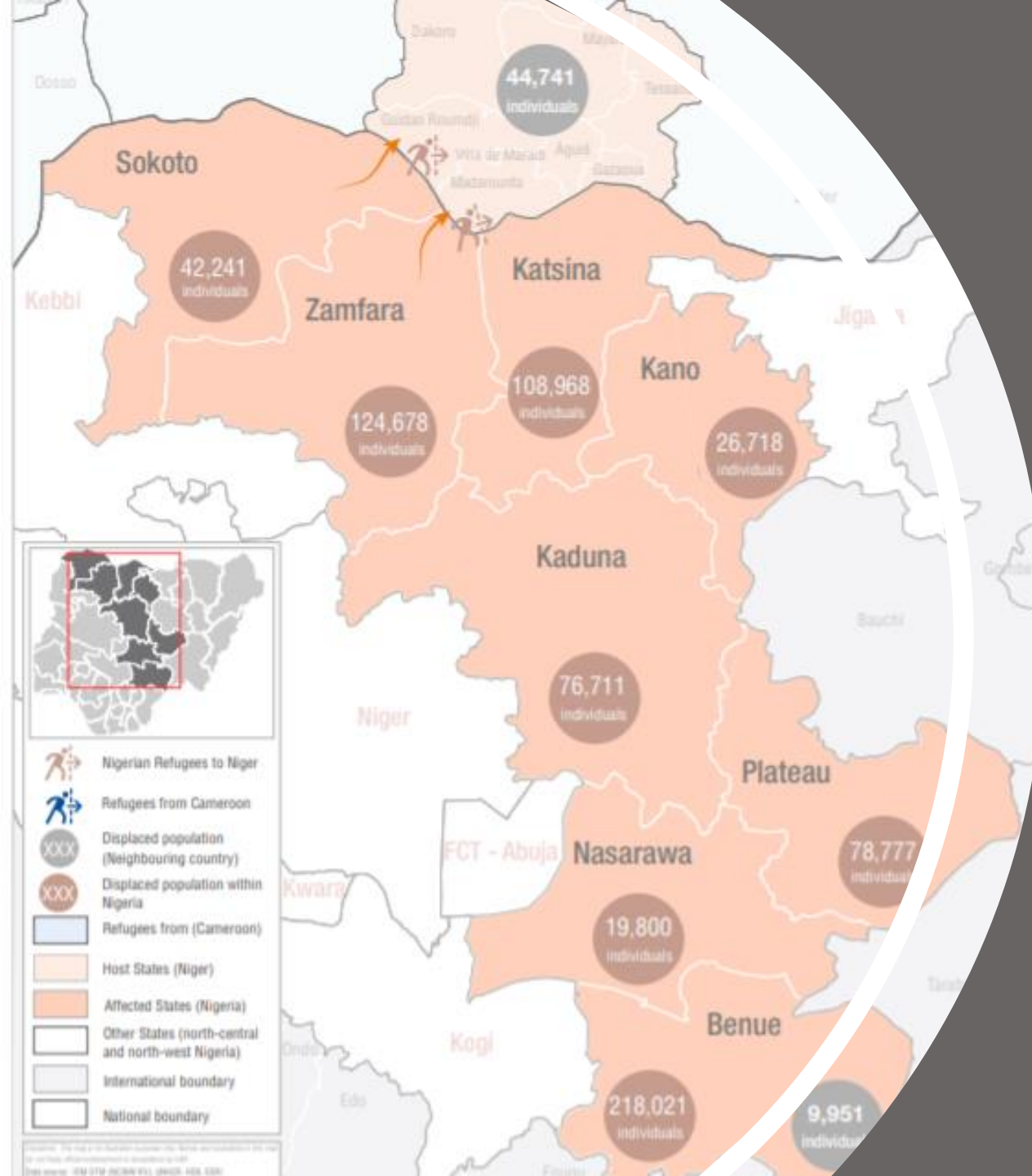


- Understand multifaceted nature of crisis in North-West and North-Central Nigeria
- Bandit-terrorists: How did they arise? Who are they fighting?
- How and why does banditry escalate?
- Why have efforts to eradicate banditry fallen short?



UNDERSTANDING THE SCALE OF BANDITRY

- Immense humanitarian crisis
 - As many as 20,000 dead since 2011
 - Roughly one million displaced
 - Up to one million children out of school
- Most geographically dispersed security challenge in Nigeria today
- Polarizing issue, fuels ethnoregional and ethnoreligious divisions
- Strains Nigeria's limited security resources



THE ORIGINS OF BANDITRY

- Farmer-herder conflict
- Injustice by traditional rulers, police and judiciary
- Formation of gangs and demand for justice
- Criminalisation of the gangs
- Cattle stealing and rustling
 - Intergenerational trade: “Bandit families”
- Escalation of violence in Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina, Kaduna & Niger states





THE FIRST GANGS

- The first gang emerged around 2011 in Zamfara under Kundu (Kanuri man in Zurmi), with his friends Mani wargage, Fitari, and Bami-yarma.
- Kundu trained Buharin Daji and Dankarmi in 2012. Buhari later killed Kundu
- These gangs recruited and trained their fellow kinsmen into what they called “Fulani liberation movement”
- Many Fulani families were cajoled or coerced into this “movement”
- Excesses of vigilante militias and *Yan Sakai* forced Fulani youth into the forest
- Our porous borders, foreign miners and local gun runners facilitated the easy acquisition of arms and ammunitions
- Buharin Daji oversees the spread of rural banditry in the northwest



TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY-BASED SECURITY AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- Communities have long policed cattle rustling on their own
- *Yan Tauri* and *Yan Banga* vigilantes dating to pre-colonial era
- Vigilantes subsumed into semi-formal umbrella group, Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) after 1999
 - State VGN chapters supported by governors
- Traditional conflict-resolution: Village head and *ardo* discuss land-use disputes, farmer-herder issues





(IN)JUSTICE AND VIGILANTISM: ORIGINS OF THE *YAN SAKAI*

- Many communities unhappy with formal Vigilante groups and corrupt/inefficient criminal justice system
 - State governments fail to support Vigilante
 - People believe government complicit in banditry
- Some Vigilante members leave outfit, start anti-bandit militias without state support
 - Groups known as *Yan Sakai* (“volunteer guards”)
- No central command or control, *Yan Sakai* form spontaneously





POLITICAL SPONSORSHIP AND ETHNICITY: GROWTH OF *YAN SAKAI*

- *Yan Sakai* need sponsors
 - Traditional leaders, businessmen
 - Opposition politicians in period of Gov. Yari (2011-2019) step forward for political reasons
- *Yan Sakai* are diverse
 - Dominated by Christians of Dakarawa in Zuru, southern Kebbi
 - Zamfara and Sokoto: mostly Muslim Hausa
- Only unifying feature of *Yan Sakai*
 - They are anti-Fulani



***YAN SAKAI* AS CONFLICT ACTORS AND CONFLICT DRIVERS**

- Adversary of bandits—or herdsmen?
 - Since mid-2010s, Bandits overpower *Yan Sakai* in most confrontations
 - Dushka >> Wagila
- Explicitly anti-Fulani militia, no oversight or training
 - Many *Yan Sakai* engage in *de facto* ethnic cleansing, attack ordinary herders rather than bandits
- Bandits claim to take up arms to protest/defend against *Yan Sakai* profiling, violence





“CRIMINAL” OR “ETHNIC” CONFLICT?

- Criminal motivations and intercommunal conflict coexist on spectrum in northwest Nigeria
 - Salience of one or another ebbs and flows over time
 - Bandits fight other bandits and Fulani
- “Bandit warlords” = Gangsters with political authority and a constituency
 - Bandits seek to maximize profit, power, prestige
 - Act as *de facto* sovereigns in many areas
- Grievances against *Yan Sakai* closest thing warlords have to “ideology” to justify banditry and build legitimacy with (some of) their subjects/constituents



TIT-FOR-TAT VIOLENCE: CASE STUDIES



- Killing of Alh. Isheyayi, Zamfara (2012)
 - *Yan Sakai* used to settle personal scores
 - Killing of a Fulani elite sparks disproportionate reprisals, banditry crisis decidedly ethnicized
- Tangaza and Goronyo, Sokoto (2021)
 - *Yan Sakai* respond to influx of bandits from Zamfara by killing local herders & Fulani IDPs
 - Bandits retaliate against Hausa civilians
 - *Yan Sakai* retaliate. . .
- Bandits are not Robin Hood, but *Yan Sakai* offer bandits **pretext** to act in “self-defense”



STATE RESPONSE AND DILEMMAS

- Vigilantes are crucial partners for security forces, but might do more harm than good
 - Military-Vigilante relations vary across NW
- Governors ban *Yan Sakai*, but this simply produces *Yan Sakai*-VGN convergence
 - *Yan Sakai* merge with or subsume local VGN, operate with tacit state backing
 - Bandits no longer distinguish b/w “vigilantes”
- VGN groups complain support from state governments doesn’t materialize
 - Corruption, political showmanship undermine security response in NW



CONCLUSION

- Transition into CJTF model?
 - Pseudo-centralized command-and-control
 - Closer collaboration with military
 - Ethnic character of *Yan Sakai* poses obstacle
- Need for comprehensive DDR
 - Previous peace deals fall short
 - No trust between *Yan Sakai* and bandits; each feels other is favored
- So long as state security forces are inadequate to face challenge of banditry, vigilantism and militias will fill the void
 - Rogue bandits produce rogue vigilantes produce rogue bandits produce. . .





FIELDWORK WITH VIGILANTES