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Banditry Insecurity in Contemporary Nigeria: A Threat to the Legacy of Sokoto Caliphate

Fatima Lawal Bako¹, Maryam Aminu², Amina Sada¹, Laila Muhammad¹

¹Staff Secondary School, Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, Nigeria

²School of Preliminary Studies, Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, Nigeria
Email; aminasada@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the menace of banditry in the legacy of the Sokoto Caliphate, a region known for its rich history and Islamic heritage. Banditry, characterized by violent crimes such as kidnapping, extortion, and robbery, has become a significant threat to the security and stability of the area. The study highlights the consequences of banditry on the legacy of the Sokoto Caliphate, including the incapacitation of the Sarauta system, destruction of peaceful coexistence among tribes, and disruption of economic activities. It also explores the security tips employed by the Sokoto Caliphate, including spiritual and practical approaches. It argues that banditry is unlawful in Islam and contradicts the ethics of the Sokoto Caliphate. The study concludes that the legacy of the Sokoto Caliphate is threatened by the advances of banditry and any form of insecurity, like Boko Haram, and calls for a comprehensive approach to address the root causes of insecurity in the region.

Keywords: Banditry Insecurity, contemporary Nigeria, Legacy of Sokoto Caliphate, Northwestern Nigeria, crime, Islam

1. Introduction

Banditry, characterized by violent crimes such as kidnapping, extortion, and robbery, has become a significant threat to the security and stability of Nigeria, particularly in the northwestern states. The menace has led to the displacement of people, destruction of property, and disruption of economic activities. The Sokoto Caliphate, a historic Islamic state that once flourished in the region, is not immune to this challenge. The legacy of the Caliphate, which is built on the principles of justice, peace, and Islamic values, is being threatened by the advances of banditry (Shareef, 2005; Abba et al., 2017; Yusuf et al., 2021).

The Sokoto Caliphate was established in 1804 by Shehu Usmanu Danfodiyo, a renowned Islamic scholar and reformer. The Caliphate emphasized education, justice, and good governance (Gwandu, 1977; Lemu, 2005; Sarkingobir, 2025a). However, the legacy of the Caliphate is being eroded by the current security challenges in the region. Banditry, in particular, has become a major concern, with many innocent lives lost and property worth millions of naira destroyed (Rosenje & Adeniyi, 2022). The major objective of this study is to examine the impact of banditry on the legacy of the Sokoto Caliphate and to explore ways of addressing the challenge of insecurity in the region, with a view to promoting peace, stability, and good governance.

2. Banditry insecurity in contemporary days

Banditry refers to violent and criminal activity that consists of raiding communities and dwellings by armed marauders for crimes (such as kidnapping, extortion, sexual abuse, robbery, cattle rustling, etc) (Ojo & Adegoke, 2024). Factors that increase the rate of banditry include unemployment, illiteracy, land-use fights, corruption, and poverty, among others. The problem is allegedly sustained by poor governance, and it affects areas such as Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Niger, Kaduna, and Katsina states in the Hausaland (Ojo & Adegoke, 2024). Banditry originated from bandits. Bandits are unlawful armed people who championed terrorizing people (Olapeju & Adeniyi, 2022).

3. Some security tips in Sokoto Caliphate

- Sokoto Caliphate as an independent state succumbs to the fact that the leadership has a duty to secure the public (citizens) and the resources (Dan Foduye, n.d; Dan Foduye, 1998; Bashar, 2025a). Achieving this requires a holistic and multidimensional approach, some of which are discussed. According to the socioecological model (SEM), the spiritual approach involves stepwise factors that facilitate human actions. The intrapersonal factors are the people's beliefs, awareness, and knowledge. Therefore, the Sokoto Caliphate pays much attention to educating the public through preaching tours, teaching, learning, and practical means. People are taught about the foundations of religion (belief), including belief in Allah, Messengers, Angels, Destiny, and relations. A spiritual approach also ensures that people are purified from factors that elicit conflicts among the public. The factors that are targeted by spiritual means in the Sokoto Caliphate include envy, greediness, pride, arrogance, sadness, enmity, bigotry, backbiting, slandering, etc, which are all prohibited according to the Sokoto Caliphate. Measures or remedies to rectify them are set in place (Sayudi & Boyd, 1974; Sharu & Bodinga, 2025). Good spiritual features are enjoined and campaigned by the Sokoto Caliphate literatures, including relying on Allah, patience, fear of Allah, and seeking Allah's mercy (Sayudi & Boyd, 1974; Sharu & Bodinga, 2025).
- Practical (behavioral) approach—According to the Stages of Change Model (SOCM), people tend to carry out a behavior when incited using education (Simpson, 2015;

Sarkingobir, 2025b). Thus, the Sokoto Caliphate takes education services with utmost seriousness. The seriousness can be depicted in the characteristics of the educational system of the Sokoto Caliphate, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of educational system of Sokoto Caliphate

S/N	Characteristics of educational system
1	The system makes education as compulsory to all
2	The system makes education to begin at birth and ends at death. Meaning it is continuous throughout life stages
3	No discrimination among people of color, tribe, region, economy, class, status, gender, and whatsoever difference
4	Universality involves use of pattern of curriculum, languages (Arabic, Fulfulde, Hausa, and other local dialects)
5	Use of accessible learning approaches such as personalized learning, open education system
6	Use of conventional learning for abled people in the Caliphate
7	Emphasis on girl-child education as in Yantaru system organized by Nana Asmau
8	Diffusion of innovation, whereby foreign teachers and books are involved
9	Localization of curriculum, therewith, the system along with foreign literatures developed its own that is adopted from foreign ones in a manner that mostly suit the locals
10	Use of teaching methods including, lecture, play way or role play, field trip or excursion, project method, etc
11	Diversified curriculum including social sciences, Quranic sciences, hadith, Fiqh, spiritual, linguistics, health, geography, scientific, and technological aspects
12	Professionalism among teachers is critical
13	Mass education among teachers sis critical, and adult education is involved. For instance, teaching people in mosques, markets, and homes, encourage access to all

Adopted from Bashar, (2025b)

- Therefore, it is expected that educated people will act positively and peacefully. Their level of education is seen in their composed literature and their ability to live in harmony, unity, and peace despite the past and their differences (Bala, 2018; Bashar, 2025b).
- Furthermore, in the will to ensure security, the state abolishes drug abuse, and killings of fellow Muslims or non-Muslims, except by the law (for instance, murder, terrorism, banditry, etc. The punishment for bandits and terrorists is death according to a Quranic verse (Adegoke, 2020). Allah SWT said:
 “And we ordained therein for them: “Life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, and wounds equal for equal.” But if anyone remits the retaliation by way of charity, it shall be for him expiation. And whosoever does not judge by that which Allah has revealed, such are the oppressors” Quran, 6:45.
- In the same vein, the social interactions of the public are guided by law. All evil things such as the corruption and oppression are prohibited by law. (Tilli, 2024).
- Another practical intervention to ensure peace and security is the arrangement that ensures military tools, transportation tools, military formations, and other forms of provisions are ensured (Chafe, 1992). Immediately, the Shehu Usmanu Danfodiyo realized that living in Gobir was no longer tenable, so he encouraged his followers to prepare and obtain weapons for possible self-defense. Barely, after the appointment of Shehu Usmanu Danfodiyo as Commander of the Faithful (*Amirul Muminina*), he appointed the Chief of Defense Staff (*Sarkin Yaki Aliyu Jedo*) and other labors (duties). In this vein, all the healthy citizens (as in the Islamic tradition) are substantially moralized and enrolled into the armed forces of the Sokoto Caliphate (except those specified) to secure towns and villages. Other purposes include proper land management, building of city wells, providing food and water, building security towns (*Ribats*), building trenches, and other methodologies (Sayudi & Boyd, 1974; Bashar, 2025a).

4. Hausaland before Sokoto Caliphate

Hausaland before the Sokoto Caliphate was a loose collection of states such as Zamfara, Kebbi, Gobir, Kano, Katsina, Ahir, etc, and they have been interacting through military campaigns with a view to having dominance or control over one another (Maishanu & Maishanu, 1999). The Fulani have been in Hausaland before the Sokoto jihad. The Fulani can be categorized into three groups: the nomadic Fulani (devoting their lives to rearing animals in the bush), the sedentary Fulani (those groups that have completely settled and abandoned animal rearing), and the semi-nomadic Fulani. However, from all the categories of Fulani in the Hausaland before the Sokoto Caliphate, there was a peaceful coexistence and interrelationships with other inhabitants; therefore, many intermarriages were ensured (Smaldone, 2008). Lastly, before the emergence of the Sokoto Caliphate, the Gobirawa, after settling in the land of Zamfara (as refugees), developed and became the most powerful state in the region (Maishanu & Maishanu, 1999). Another problem of the society was the insignificant number of people adhering to true Islam. Many people are either mixing Islam with other idols or are completely unaware of the true nature of Islam (Kaura, 2009; Abdullahi, 2016). Furthermore, women's and children's (or generally the weak) rights are avoided (Kaura, 2009). Sheriff & Altine (2018) disclosed that Islam was essentially found in royals before the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate. However, with the inception of the Caliphate, Islam flourished significantly even in non-Hausa areas such as Ilorin, Nupe, etc. It

spurred a universal adoption of Hausa culture in the area. Alkali & Daud (2018) reported the Sokoto Caliphate establishment as

“When the jihad succeeded Shehu established a real Islamic state with full political powers and the entire requirement expected of an Islamic state.”

There is practice of Shariah in both private and public life of the populace (Alkali & Daud, 2018). Likewise, Mainiyo & Abubakar (2016) disclosed that the most important aspect of Sokoto Caliphate was the establishment of true Islamic state.

5. Sokoto Caliphates Inception

Due to Quranic injunctions such as the following:

“Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better. Truly, your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His path, and He is the best Aware of those who are guided” (Qur’an,16:125).

Shehu Usmanu Danfodiyo laid the foundation for the emergence of what is now distinguished as the Sokoto Caliphate. Shehu was a well-versed academic and scholar who thrived in Hausaland. For instance, he studied Islamic sciences, such as the Quran, Tafsir, Hadith, Linguistics, and Fiqh. Shehu came on board while there was a wide practice of unlawful things in the land, and therefore, challenged the status quo (Okene & Ahmad, 2011). In this vein, Caliphate is an Arabic-driven word that refers to a territory (country or states) governed by a leader called *Khalifah* based on the tenets of Islam. Sokoto Caliphate is a typical jihad-driven state established by Shehu Usmanu Danfodiyo (Munir & Odeh, 2014). The legacies of the Sokoto Caliphate are multidimensional. It had made an impact by creating the largest state run by a Caliph under the tutelage of Islam. Consequently, the formed Caliphate existed for about a century before the invasion by the British.

The Sokoto Caliphate made humongous progress in unifying the region despite its vast nature, differences in tribes and locations, and past feuds (conflicts). It therefore creates professional activities (such as teaching, metal technology, healthcare services, wood carving, etc), a free market, and a gigantic source of materials and human resources. Security methodology was improved, cities were formed, agricultural towns were formed, administrative towns were established, human rights were ensured, and all education was prioritized. In the employment field, the state created opportunities for all, laid rules to abolish corruption in trade and businesses, and generated wealth (Munir & Odeh, 2014). Summarily, the Sokoto Caliphate led to the establishment of a true Islamic state, as opined by Mainiyo & Abubakar (2018), Munir & Odeh (2014), and Sheriff (2016). Sheriff (2016) corroborated that the Caliphate established an army (which was divisional based on labor or region) to fortify the state. All citizens serve as representatives of Allah to ensure justice on earth and no discrimination based on any difference. Controversies remaining to be answered. There are a lot of questions surrounding the banditry in Nigeria (northern part, which was an initial part of the then Sokoto Caliphate). Some of these controversies or questions are as follows:

- Banditry has spent over a decade virtually unperturbed, destroying material and human resources in the legacy of the Sokoto Caliphate. The bandits wield harmful and modernized weapons. It is popular that the bandits are villagers or illiterates and poor. Then, who is bankrolling and training them? Someone must definitely be doing that, and that person or organization must be wealthy or professional to traverse the land and skip the very apparatus of the country.
- Why is that, the bandits are proliferating and traversing the northern part of Nigeria (and some parts of the Niger Republic), destroying Muslim settlements, worship

places, and wealth and resources, while on the other hand claiming that they are Muslims? Even a little interaction shows that they know little or nothing about Islam. The killing of people, especially Muslims, is illegal except under the law.

- Sadly, the implications of the banditry are many, but it may create an avenue to blackmail Muslims and the Sokoto Caliphate as well.
- It is important to note that, banditry is unlawful in Islam and in the ethics of Sokoto Caliphate.

6. Consequences of banditry insecurity on legacy of Sokoto Caliphate

There are many consequences of insecurity on the legacies of the Sokoto Caliphate. Islam is the religion of peace, and the Sokoto Caliphate thrives on the values and ethics of Islam. The advances of present-day insecurity (banditry and *Boko Haram*) threaten the legacies of the Sokoto Caliphate, because it destroys the very foundation laid for the Caliphate system. The following are some identified effects (consequences) of insecurity on the Sokoto Caliphate legacy:

- Incapacitation of *the Sarauta* system- The Hausaland had an established leadership system before the Sokoto Caliphate, which was later adopted at the inception of the Caliphate. The system had worked perfectly well due to its assimilation of Islamic ethics and law. Still, with the invasion of the Caliphate by the British and successive democratic developments made by incoming administrations, the system had weakened over the years. The *sarauta* system is the indigenous and Islamic-based leadership that has brought peace, harmony, and progress to locals in Hausaland (Abdulqadir, 2020). According to the Sokoto Caliphate, they are meant to lead by the Quran and Sunnah, acting as representatives (viceroys) of Allah on land to maintain justice for all. They ensure Shariah and the development of all citizens and the country (Sheriff, 2016). This period of insecurity had left the *Sarakuna* (leaders) vulnerable to attack by bandits (likewise, their subjects are being constantly attacked), and they are helpless because they have no control over the security apparatus (forces) (Abdulqadir, 2020). The *Sarakuna* and their subjects are left at the mercy of nature, bandits could easily attack them in the villages, while the security forces are few and live in the cities (affected by poor funding and poor population) (Acka, 2022).
- Destruction of the peaceful existence among tribes of Hausaland- Islam calls on Muslims to live as brothers keepers. However, with banditry's emergence, some tribes may be set against others. Some tribes may target others as bandits or informants. Many innocent villagers may be targeted for suspicion by the city dwellers or security agencies, who may attack them, considering them enemies. May reports tag Fulani as "bandits, but there are many innocent villages (be it of Fulani or not) being victimized mistakenly or deliberately (Acka, 2022; Ojo & Adegoke, 2024). Banditry is against the Islamic and the Sokoto Caliphate's policies of Shariah. In the Shariah system, Muslims and others live in harmony and are forbidden from innocently taking life or property or terrorizing one another (Alkali & Daud, 2018).
- Destruction of economic activities- The Major culture of the dwellers in the legacy Sokoto Caliphate is agriculture. The citizens relied on farming (crop farmers, animal rearers, fishers, hunters, and animal keepers) (Muhammad, 2003; Islahi, 2011). Thus, many citizens utilized farms or bushes to support their businesses and earn a living. The bandits have been preventing many farmers from attending to their work. Likewise, military campaigns are also contributing to the pollution and destruction of farms and bushes. The Sokoto Caliphate assumed all citizens to be equal in the eyes of the law. It also prohibits ill-deeds such as corruption, excessive taxation, and

banditry (Sayudi & Boyd, 1974). The Caliphate ensures a value-added economy and professionalism, provides avenues and laws guiding internal and external trade, means of communication, means of transportation, and educational reforms (Bashar, 2025b).

- Public health effects—Military activities by bandits or security agents of the state cause considerable pollution that affects farms, soils, air, water, and public health. Moreover, reduced farming and animal keeping cause public health nutrition crises as well. Often, bandits prevent villagers from accessing healthcare services either by preventing rural health workers from going to posts or preventing villages from accessing towns with ease.
- 7. Disruption of the educational system—Due to banditry, several rural areas were displaced, and schools closed or were transferred to distant areas. This makes it difficult for many rural people to access education (Muhammad et al., 2023). In the eyes of the Sokoto Caliphate, education starts from birth to death (Lemu, 2005).

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the menace of banditry poses a significant threat to the legacy of the Sokoto Caliphate, undermining the region's security, stability, and economic prosperity. The consequences of banditry are far-reaching, affecting not only the *Sarauta* system but also the peaceful coexistence among tribes and the region's overall economic development. It is essential to adopt a comprehensive approach incorporating spiritual and practical measures to address this challenge, as exemplified by the Sokoto Caliphate's security tips. By understanding the causes of banditry and learning from the legacy of the Sokoto Caliphate, stakeholders can work together to develop effective strategies for promoting peace, security, and stability in the region. Here are some possible recommendations:

- Strengthen Security Measures: Enhance security presence in vulnerable areas, improve intelligence gathering, and provide support to security agencies.
- Promote Economic Development: Implement economic empowerment programs, create job opportunities, and invest in infrastructure development.
- Community Engagement: Engage with local communities, promote dialogue, and encourage community-led initiatives to prevent banditry.
- Education and Awareness: Promote education and awareness about the dangers of banditry, its impact on communities, and the importance of peaceful coexistence.
- Collaboration and Partnership: Foster collaboration between government agencies, security forces, and local communities to address the root causes of banditry.
- Revitalize *Sarauta* System: Revitalize the *Sarauta* system by empowering traditional leaders to play a more active role in promoting peace and security.
- Islamic Teachings: Promote Islamic teachings that emphasize peace, tolerance, and coexistence, and counter extremist ideologies.
- Address Poverty and Unemployment: Address poverty and unemployment through sustainable economic programs and social welfare initiatives.

These recommendations aim to address the root causes of banditry, promote economic development, and strengthen security measures to ensure peace and stability in the region.

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