

Assessing the Contributions of KSCSWC in Mitigating Banditry in Katsina State: A *Siyāsah al-Shar‘iyyah* Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Persistent banditry and general insecurity remains a critical impediment to socio-economic stability in Katsina State, Nigeria. This study assesses the functional contributions and theological legitimacy of the Katsina State Community Security Watch Corps (KSCSWC) from an Islamic perspective. Utilizing a qualitative methodology supplemented by fieldwork and direct observation, the research examines how the Corps’ mandates align with the preservation of the five essential necessities (*Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah*). The study employed a descriptive-analytical design, utilizing purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews analyzed through thematic categorization to evaluate theological and functional outcomes. Findings indicate that the KSCSWC’s involvement in intelligence gathering, the containment of armed groups, and the rescue of captives are consistent with the Islamic principles of *Hirāsah* (Guardianship) and *Ribāt* (Communal Vigilance). The study concludes that the formalization of the KSCSWC has facilitated a return to communal *Sakinah* (tranquility). It recommends a continued integration of faith-based ethical training to ensure the Corps operates within the boundaries of *Inṣāf* (Justice).

Key Words: KSCSWC, Banditry, Insecurity, Katsina State Nigeria, *Siyāsah al-Shar‘iyyah*

INTRODUCTION

The Northwest region of Nigeria, and specifically Katsina State, has been engulfed in a wave of rural banditry, cattle rustling, and mass kidnappings. This state of *Fasād* (mischief on earth) has disrupted the traditional way of life, leading to the abandonment of ancestral lands and a collapse of local trade. Centralized policing models, while robust in urban centers, have faced geographical and logistical hurdles in the vast, porous forests of the North.

The establishment of the Katsina State Community Security Watch Corps (KSCSWC) represents a paradigm shift in the state’s security architecture. By legalizing a localized, community-driven force, the state government has sought to bridge the gap between official law enforcement and the communities they serve. This paper analyzes the effectiveness and legitimacy of this intervention through the lens of *Siyāsah al-Shar‘iyyah* (Islamic Administrative Policy), which empowers the ruler (*Ulū al-Amr*) to take necessary actions for the public welfare, even if specific precedents are not found in literal scripture, provided they align with the spirit of the Sharī‘ah.

Despite the growing body of literature on the socio-political dimensions of the Northwest security crisis, there remains a significant scholarly void regarding the intersection of modern localized policing and classical Islamic administrative jurisprudence. Most contemporary analyses evaluate the Katsina State Community Security Watch Corps (KSCSWC) through a purely secular, state-centric lens, overlooking the profound theological and ethical frameworks that govern communal safety in a predominantly Muslim society. This study addresses this gap by providing a pioneering appraisal of the KSCSWC not merely as a tactical response to banditry, but as an institutional manifestation of *Siyāsah al-Shar‘iyyah* (Islamic Administrative Policy). By examining the Corps’ operational legitimacy through the objectives of the *Sharī‘ah* (*Maqāṣid*), this research offers a unique normative framework for evaluating community-driven security models in contemporary Islamic contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing scholarship on community-led security in Nigeria has traditionally operated within secular, state-centric frameworks, often marginalizing the role of indigenous and faith-based governance models. Early contributions, such as Agbibo (2013) and Ibrahim (2014), provided foundational insights into the rise of vigilantism and the logistical potential of rural community policing. However, these studies largely ignored the ontological and ethical paradigms that inform security actors in predominantly Muslim societies, focusing instead on socio-political triggers and state failure.

Recent empirical evidence has begun to shift this focus toward the institutionalization of local forces. Bello and Olutola (2022), in their study of paramilitary responses to banditry in the Northwest, argued that centralized security architectures are inherently ill-equipped for forest warfare, necessitating 'hybrid' security regimes. Similarly, Abdullahi (2024) examined the legal frameworks of state-sponsored volunteer groups in Katsina and Zamfara, concluding that while these groups improve response times, they often face crises of 'normative legitimacy' among the local populace.

Despite these advancements, a critical research gap remains. There is a profound lack of literature that evaluates the operational mandates of the Katsina State Community Security Watch Corps (KSCSWC) through the specific prism of *Siyāsah al-Shar'īyyah* (Islamic Administrative Policy). While secular studies focus on legislative legality, they fail to account for how the Corps' functions in the area of intelligence gathering and the rescue of captives, that align with the theological obligations of *Hirāsah* (Guardianship) and the preservation of *Maṣlahah* (Public Interest). This study, therefore, demonstrates novelty by moving beyond a purely functionalist critique to offer a dual-track appraisal: validating the KSCSWC's contributions both as a modern security necessity and as a legitimate exercise of the ruler's (*Ulū al-Amr*) authority to protect the five essential goals of the *Sharī'ah* (*Maqāṣid*).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-qualitative design to evaluate the Katsina State Community Security Watch Corps (KSCSWC) through the lens of *Siyāsah al-Shar'īyyah*. It also used the following research procedures:

- **Sampling & Participants:** Utilizing purposive sampling, the study engaged 15 key informants (\$N=15\$), including senior KSCSWC officers, traditional community leaders, and Islamic scholars (*Ulamā'*) across the Katsina, Funtua, and Daura zones.
- **Data Collection:** Primary data were gathered via semi-structured interviews and field observations at command centers, focusing on operational protocols and their alignment with Islamic legal objectives (*Maqāṣid*).
- **Data Analysis:** The research utilized Thematic Analysis, involving systematic coding and categorization of transcripts to identify core themes such as *Institutional Legitimacy*, *Public Welfare (Maṣlahah)*, and *Communal Tranquility (Sakīnah)*.
- **Trustworthiness:** The integrity of the findings was ensured through triangulation of sources (interviews vs. observations) and maintaining a clear audit trail to satisfy the criteria of credibility, dependability, and confirmability.

Islam, Community Security, and the Mandate of Protection

Auda, J. (2008) argued that Islam permitted and encouraged modern, systemic approach to security that integrates community policing. While Nyazee (2000) emphasized that community security is part of the public interests (*Maslahah*) which justifies state-led security initiatives. The institution of *Hisbah* in Islam is the historical precedent for "Security Watch" groups that engage in monitoring public order and preventing harm (Ibn Taymiyyah 1982).

Islam obligated the rulers to provide security to the citizens of the state as part of responsibility imposed on them. According to Al-Mawardi, (1996), Islam mandated a ruler to provide public safety (Al-Amn) to the entire citizens living under his state. He explicitly stated that it is part of the responsibility of a Muslim leader to ensure public safety (*Hifz al-Amn*) in his state.

In Islamic jurisprudence, security is not merely a secular convenience but a foundational requirement for spiritual life. The Qur'an highlights this in *Surah Quraysh* (106:4), where Allah SWT reminds the people that He provided them with food against hunger and "security against fear." Without *Amn* (security), some Islamic rituals such as *Jumu'ah* prayers and the Hajj cannot be safely performed.

Ibn al-Qayyim (2000) maintained that intelligence gathering, and proactive security is part of Shari'ah-compliant governance. He further argues that any method that leads to justice and security is part of the Shari'ah, even if not explicitly mentioned in the Quran/Sunnah. Therefore, it is necessary on any government to prepare to take these measures with utmost seriousness for the protection the entire citizens. The following are some other important concepts in relation to community security:

The Concept of *Hirāsah* (Guarding)

Hirāsah refers to the act of guarding or maintaining vigilance over the community. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) gave high praise to those who keep watch at night to protect the community. The KSCSWC members, by performing night patrols and guarding forest borders, fulfill the classical role of the *Hāris*. This function is proactive as it seeks to identify threats before they manifest in violence (Khan, 2019).

Preservation of *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah*

The primary objective of *Siyāsah al-Sharī'yyah* is the preservation of the five essentials (*Al-Darūriyyāt al-Khams*) as explained in the following:

1. ***Dīn* (Religion):** Enabling people to worship without fear of attack and safeguarding their religious freedom (Al-Ghazali 1937).
2. ***Nafs* (Life):** Protecting citizens from the lethal violence, attacks and killings (Al-Raysuni, 2005).
3. ***'Aql* (Intellect):** Wiping out the psychological trauma associated with constant fear and safeguarding people's intellects (Al-Ghazali 1937).
4. ***Nasl* (Progeny/Dignity):** Protecting families from the indignity of abduction and sexual violence and corruption of their lineage (Al-Ghazali 1937).
5. ***Māl* (Property):** Safeguarding people's belongings and properties such as livestock and farm produce from any form of illegal destruction and rustling (Al-Raysuni, 2005).

The KSCSWC's mandate is directly mapped to the above five *Shari'ah* goals, making its existence a religious and administrative necessity (*Darūrah*). This is in line with the view of Al-Raysuni (2005) who posited that protecting the community from bandits is a fulfillment of the *Daruriyyat* (Necessities) and part of the responsibility of a state.

Analysis of the Contributions of KSCSWC

Intelligence Gathering (*Tajassus* for Public Good)

In common Islamic ethics, *Tajassus* (spying) is prohibited in the context of invading the privacy of innocent neighbors. However, in the context of national security and the prevention of crime, it becomes a *Wājib* (obligatory) as analyzed below:

- **Preventative Jurisprudence:** The principle of *Sadd al-Dharā'i'* (blocking the means to evil) justifies the use of undercover intelligence to prevent bandit attacks before they occur.

- **The Local Intelligence Edge:** Mohammed (2021) argues that the failure of federal forces is often due to an “information gap”. KSCSWC members, being indigenous to their wards, possess “tacit knowledge”. They understand the local terrain, know the families of suspected collaborators, and can decode subtle changes in communal behavior that signal an impending raid.

Neutralizing Armed Groups (*Muhāribūn*)

The bandits operating in Katsina State are not mere thieves; they are *Muhāribūn*. Under Islamic law, *Hirābah* (armed robbery/terrorism) is one of the most serious crimes. Some of the contributions of KSCSWC’s war against *Muhāribūn* are as follows:

- **Legal Force:** The neutralization of leaders like Sani Waka Burki (PUNCH, 2024) is a legitimate application of force to stop *Fasād*. In *Siyāsah al-Shar’iyyah*, the ruler has the authority to use lethal force to protect the lives of the majority.
- **Proportionality and *Adl*:** While force is necessary, the Corps is trained to operate within legal frameworks to ensure that “neutralization” occurs in the heat of combat or through legal apprehension, rather than extrajudicial execution without cause.

Rescuing Captives (*Fakk al-’Anī*)

The rescue of kidnapped persons is perhaps the most celebrated role of the Corps. Islamic law places a collective duty (*Fard al-Kifāyah*) on the community to ransom or rescue captives as exemplified below:

- **Active Extraction:** Unlike traditional forces that may rely on high-altitude surveillance, the KSCSWC engages in ground extraction. In 2024, multiple reports indicated successful operations in the Rugu Forest where captives were tracked and liberated (Leadership, 2024).
- **Restoring *Sakinah*:** The return of a captive is not just a security success; it is a restoration of the family unit, which is the bedrock of the Muslim community.

Perceptions of Banditry Victims on State of Security before and after Establishment of the KSCSWC

The validity of this comparative analysis is grounded in Data Triangulation, which corroborates primary field observations and semi-structured interviews with secondary scholarly data (Yusuf, 2023) and empirical media reports (PUNCH, 2024). This multi-source approach ensures ‘Confirmability’ by aligning qualitative themes, such as the transition from *Khawf* (Fear) to *Sakīnah* (Tranquility), with measurable socio-economic outcomes

Data collected from local government areas (LGAs) that included Batsari, Safana, and Kankara show a marked difference in public perception regarding the operations of the KSCSWC as indicated in the following table:

Feature of Analysis	Before the Establishment of the KSCSWC	After the Establishment of the KSCSWC
Response Time	Delayed; often hours or days (Yusuf, 2023).	Rapid; within minutes of distress calls.
Intelligence Accuracy	Low; unfamiliarity with forest paths.	High; residents know every hideout.
Public Confidence	Widespread fear (<i>Khawf</i>); ghost towns.	Emerging tranquility (<i>Sakinah</i>); return to markets.
Economic Impact	Abandoned farms; collapse of local trade.	Resumption of farming (PUNCH, 2024).

Data collected from interviews with survivors indicate that the presence of the Corps acts as a psychological deterrent. Victims reported that seeing “one of their own” in uniform provides a sense of communal ownership over their safety.

1. Theological Challenges and Ethical Boundaries

While the KSCSWC is a force for good, it must navigate the thin line between security and *Zulm* (oppression) as summarized below:

Avoiding Extrajudicial Execution

Islam strictly forbids punishing the innocent for the crimes of the guilty. The Corps must avoid “guilt by association” tactics. For instance, the relatives of a bandit cannot be harassed unless they are proven collaborators.

The Requirement of *Inṣāf* (Fairness)

In the heat of conflict, there is a risk of tribal or ethnic profiling. The *Siyāsah al-Shar‘iyyah* perspective insists that *Adl* (Justice) must be applied even to enemies. Training manuals for the Corps must emphasize the Islamic codes of conduct in war (*Adab al-Ḥarb*), which forbid the harming of non-combatants, women, and the elderly.

2. Socio-Economic Restoration

The contributions of the KSCSWC are most visible in the revival of the rural economy.

- **Food Security:** With the Corps patrolling farm borders, farmers who had fled to IDP camps are returning. In Islam, “cultivating the land” is a form of worship, and its resumption signifies a return to a healthy state of *Ma‘īshah* (livelihood).
- **Education:** Rural schools, many of which were closed due to kidnapping threats, are beginning to reopen under the watchful eye of the Corps.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study has critically assessed the Katsina State Community Security Watch Corps (KSCSWC) as a contemporary institutional manifestation of *Siyāsah al-Shar‘iyyah*. The findings demonstrate that the Corps’ operational success is not merely a product of tactical decentralization, but is fundamentally rooted in its normative legitimacy. By transitioning the community from a state of *Khawf* (pervasive fear) to *Sakīnah* (tranquility), the KSCSWC has fulfilled the primary mandate of the *Ulū al-Amr* (the ruler) to preserve the five essential necessities (*Al-Darūriyyāt al-Khams*).

Analysis of field data and comparative metrics confirms that the “local intelligence skills” possessed by the Corps has effectively bridged the “information gap” that previously hampered federal security agencies. The functional alignment of the Corps with the classical principles of *Hirāsah* (Guardianship) and *Ribāt* (Vigilance) provides a robust theological justification for state-sponsored localized policing. However, the study concludes that while the KSCSWC has achieved significant “Functional Legitimacy” through the neutralization of *Muhāribūn* (bandits) and the resumption of agrarian livelihoods, its long-term ethical legitimacy remains dependent on its adherence to the strict boundaries of *Inṣāf* (Fairness) and *Adl* (Justice). Ultimately, the KSCSWC serves as a pioneering model for how Islamic administrative policy can be dynamically applied to solve modern security crises in post-colonial African contexts.

Recommendations

Based on the critical analysis of the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to ensure the sustainability and ethical integrity of the Corps:

1. **Institutionalization of Maqāsid-Based Ethical Training:** The Katsina State Government, in partnership with academic institutions like Umaru Musa Yar'adua University Katsina (UMYUK), should move beyond tactical drills and establish a mandatory curriculum in *Adab al-Harb* (Islamic ethics of engagement). This will mitigate the risk of tribal profiling and ensure that "neutralization" operations remain within the boundaries of Shari'ah-compliant justice.
2. **Implementation of Shūra-Based Oversight:** To prevent the crisis of normative legitimacy identified in contemporary literature, the state should establish **Local** Consultative (Shūra) Councils at the LGA level. These councils, comprising traditional rulers and *Ulamā'*, should serve as an accountability mechanism to monitor the conduct of the Corps and mediate community grievances.
3. **Technological Augmentation of Tajassus (Intelligence):** While local tacit knowledge is a primary strength, the state should integrate affordable drone surveillance and geo-spatial mapping to enhance the Corps' ability to monitor porous forest borders. This aligns with the principle of *Sadd al-Dharā'i'* (blocking the means to evil) by proactively identifying bandit movements.
4. **Thematic Integration of Faith and Finance:** To ensure fiscal sustainability, the state should explore the establishment of a Security *Waqf* (Endowment) or a *Zakāt*-aligned security trust fund. This would involve public-private partnerships that allow the business community to contribute to the *Maṣlahah* (public interest) of state security, reducing reliance on fluctuating political budgets.
5. **Documentation and Standardization:** The KSCSWC should develop a standardized reporting template for field operations to create an "audit trail" of engagements. This will satisfy the requirements of transparency and provide a data-driven basis for future research and policy adjustments.

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