

# Insecurity in Nigeria: Towards Addressing the Drivers of Sustained Violent Attacks and Security Breakdown

Oguadinma Joshua Jones<sup>a\*</sup>, Ogana Michael<sup>b</sup>, Ugwuibe Onyemaechi  
Christopher<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka*

<sup>b</sup>*Department of Business Administration, Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi Ukwu*

<sup>c</sup>*Department of Public Administration and Local Government, University of Nigeria, Nsukka*

<sup>a</sup>*Email: joshua.oguanma@unn.edu.ng*

## Abstract

The upsurge in criminal terror attacks perpetrated by insurgent and other violent groups in Nigeria is despicable. With impunity they kill security operatives, massacre and kidnap innocent citizens for ransom, just to pursue a political cause or a quest for personal gain. Works by scholars on the subject argued that each uprising takes a cue from some underlying factors such as religious fundamentalism, political self determination and resource related cleavages that are likely to lead the country to a failed state. The paper interrogated the continued rise in terrorism and violence in Nigeria as it attempted to unravel the role of some critical factors that trigger and encourage incessant mayhem in the country. It anchored on Frustration-Aggression theory to explain the basis of hostilities using the secondary source of data collection and analysis. The travails of political instability and poverty, among others, were found to have engendered terrorism and other forms of violence that ravaged Nigeria. The government should seek pragmatic ways of attending to the root drivers of terrorism and widespread violence to curb the killings. Also, concerted effort to reduce poverty and unemployment levels among youths, so as to checkmate the propensity for violence and criminality, is suggested.

**Keywords:** Criminality; Poverty; Religion; Terrorism; Violence.

## 1. Introduction

Historically, Nigeria has unfortunately been engulfed for a long time, by ethno-religious violence and communal cleavages. A cursory view of these conflicts would seem to depict religious differences or tensions between ethnic blocs made up of Christian and Muslim inhabitants.

---

\* Corresponding author.

But a deeper look may, however, reveal that some critical factors and politics, which precisely involve control of government resources, are responsible for many of these conflicts [1]. Up till recent times, Nigeria has been enveloped in escalated violent hostile attacks ranging from sustained terrorism, banditry, occupational-based cleavages, and secession insurgencies from different parts of the country. Before the present millennium, the country was relatively free from the menace of outright terror attacks. But gradually it crept into the system and has refused to go away for many years. For instance, Boko Haram, which initially surfaced as mere fundamentalist Islamist movement, has speedily grown into a formidable terrorist organization that has withstood the Nigerian federal troops that has been engaging them in armed combat with full land and air military bombardments. This has virtually transformed the northeast geopolitical zone of the country into a semi theater of war, over time. For the past decade and more, Nigeria has been battling the deadly Islamist Boko Haram group in an insurgency, which has claimed up to 30,000 lives and rendered 2.3 million people displaced within the northeast region of Nigeria. Currently, the group has broken into two factions namely; the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and the Jamaa'atul Ahlis Sunnah (JAS). Both groups carry out attacks on civilians, aid workers, and the military [2].

The clandestine kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls in Chibok by the Boko Haram Islamist militants in 2014 stunned the world. The whooping number of children, as well as the unchallenged style used by the group to carry out their plan, was unique and attracted international condemnation [3]. But a recent trend of mass abductions in northern schools, relatively, renders the Chibok girls' episode less barbaric. In recent happenings, there have been cases of mass abductions of more than 800 students at four boarding schools in north-west Nigeria. These happened far from Boko Haram's domain, perpetrated by new groups called 'Bandits'. A huge number of people in northwest are experiencing the ever increasing menace of banditry being a kind of organized crime encompassing armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, murder, cattle-rustling, and also clandestine exploitation of mineral resources. Banditry involving arms has turned out as a huge security challenge in Nigeria, notably the northwest, where it is currently terrorizing communities who are murdered gruesomely and displaced in their tens of thousands. It has hindered socio-economic development while threatening governance to a great extent. "Bandit" as applied here connotes an umbrella term that describes various groups that perpetrate violent attacks, killing many people in local communities, and also kidnapping scores for ransoms. The epicenters of the unfolding crisis are Katsina, Kaduna and Zamfara states. Though it has spread to more states, it appears more endemic in Zamfara. The source of this lawlessness is not straight-forward as the Boko Haram militancy since it seems a combination of multiple factors [2].

Since 2011, nearly 200,000 people have fled bandit violence and remained internally displaced within the northwest region. The number of Nigerians that have fled to neighboring countries is approximately 77,000. More so, the humanitarian efforts to respond to these crises in Nigeria as well as others in neighboring countries in the Sahel have become difficult. Boko Haram terrorist organization has begun forming alliances with bandit groups in the northwest because they plan to extend their base other than the northeast. Though the faction leader, Abubakar Shekau, had claimed they were responsible for the mass kidnap of about 300 students in Kankara, the bandits were key suspects for the crime and may have likely handed over some of the boys to the terrorists in return for weapons or money. The collaboration between criminal groups and violent extremists has indeed worsened the state of insecurity and strengthened the powers of non-state actors in Nigeria [3]. The term

banditry is used in different parts of Nigeria to describe various criminal actions of dissidents. In actual fact, the application rhymes with two causal problems like ineffectiveness of law enforcement experienced in Southern Nigeria and the challenge of ungoverned areas in Northern part of Nigeria. Over time, evidence on ground predicts a link between weak governance and banditry [4].

Benue state, the hotbed of all kinds of clashes in Nigeria's middle-belt, is not publicized enough. Daily, rural communities are attacked by gunmen. The end results of these attacks is heaps of dead bodies, deserted homes, maimed victims, and shattered livelihoods. The hostilities have been escalating up till 2021. By the last quarter of 2020, 13 or more people lost their lives in four attacks around the state. Subsequently, within the first quarter of 2021, about 149 people were also killed in 15 attacks, as reported in Nextier SPD database. A May 2021 report had it that Samuel Ortom, the Governor of Benue state, told his people to defend themselves against the incessant obnoxious violence. As if to show off aggressive challenge, the convoy of the governor was attacked in early March of this year by unidentified gunmen. Another seven people died in a gunmen attack in April 2021 at an Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) Camp. In his reaction to the mayhem, the Governor enjoined the Federal government to declare a state of emergency in Benue state. Within the period, more than 70 lives were lost in three local government areas in two weeks. Approximately, 100 persons were massacred in Benue rural areas between May 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021. Since 2020, about 100,000 internal displacements were recorded due to rising insecurity in Benue state according to the executive secretary of Benue State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) Dr. Emmanuel Shior [5].

Some years ago, following the return to democracy in 1999, a wave of protests replete with violent militancy began in 2003. The violence emanated from political campaigns within that year. [6] In a show of power to get to political offices, the Rivers State politicians used the Niger Delta Vigilantes (NDV), of which Ateke Tom was the leader, and Asari Dokubo's Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF). These groups were manipulated in order to achieve their political ambitions by employing violence and intimidation against their adversaries [7]. Asari Dokubo was arrested in 2005 for alleged treason. The space created as a result of the arrest led to the inauguration of some other groups such as Niger Delta Militants (NDM), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta Freedom Fighters (NDFF), the Coalition for Militant Action (COMA) and the Martyrs Brigade within the Niger Delta region. While Dokubo was locked up, these new groups started making demands of which among them were that Asari Dokubo should be released unconditionally; across the board payment of compensation as a result of many years of environmental degradation; increment of the derivation allocation of 13% to 50% accruable to oil-owning communities; the building of infrastructural facilities and employment opportunities to be extended to the youths in the region. These tensions metamorphosed into violent armed attacks in 2006 as these groups commenced bombing of strategic oil installations, kidnapping of expatriate workers in oil industry, oil bunkering and armed combat with security forces, notably the army [8].

Recently, another terrorist-like attack has erupted, manifesting in quick successions of gruesome 'shoot-and-kill' method within the Southeast and South-south regions of Nigeria by 'unknown gunmen'. Their primary targets have been the law enforcement agents such as the police, Army, correctional facilities (Prisons) and a wave of assassinations. Recent reports from BBC online said that in Akwa Ibom State 13 police officers have

lost their lives to "unknown gunmen" attacks. They died from separate attacks in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States between Friday, 7 May and Sunday, 9 May, 2021. In recent attacks, gunmen struck at two moribund police posts located at Mkpanak in Essien Udim and Ikot Odon in Abak LGAs. In Ikot Odon, the police said they burnt down one scrap vehicle that was parked outside and a motorcycle. While in the case of Mkpanak, the quick response from youths of the community helped to put off the fire set on the building. Unfortunately, one of the officers attached to Mopol-57 Ukana, was killed as he was going to work. In another attack at Odoro Ikpe, unknown gunmen killed five officers on Saturday 8 May, 2021 including the wife of one of the officers that came to visit him.

In Rivers State on Friday, 7 May 2021, gunmen attacked and killed seven Policemen in three separate attacks, which includes Rumuji Divisional Police Station, Emohua, Police checkpoint at Choba and Elingbu Police Station at Obio Akpor. Some of the gunmen were carrying Ak47 rifles. Two other officers were wounded and police patrol vans were razed. Reports from Anambra State had it that gunmen attacked Ozubulu in Ekwusigbo local government area of the state. On 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2021, Police confirmed to BBC Pidgin that some hoodlums attacked the Anambra Vigilante office in Ozubulu. They came with vehicles and motorcycles and started shooting sporadically. According to the report, two unidentified persons sustained gun-shot injuries. The hoodlums also attacked the Ozubulu police station but without success due to the timely armed resistance by the police. They set fire on one of the cars parked near the station as they were escaping. South eastern Nigeria has been on the news recently with reports of attack by unknown gunmen terrorizing the region in all the five states [9].

In the Southwest, there has been an ongoing secession agitation championed by the Yoruba freedom fighter, Chief Sunday Adeyemo, also known as Sunday Igboho. As reported, one of his aides narrated the scene at Igboho's Soka, Ibadan residence during the raid of the operatives of the Department of State Security (DSS) and the army, describing it akin to a Commando operation. While speaking with *Vanguard reporter*, Igboho's aide said the operation was like a movie scene in the early hours of the day, as operatives of the army and the DSS attacked the building with a mission not known to those living there. When Igboho noticed that the gunmen had entered, he started a shootout with them as he got the wind that they had already shot and killed some of his men. The security forces allegedly made away with about N3million from Igboho's room along his jewelry. They also took away the corpses of those killed but in the end, Igboho was nowhere to be found [10].

Considering the above scenarios of coordinated attacks bedeviling Nigeria, the end to these violent upheavals needs intelligible strategies or it could culminate into pushing the country into a failed state, if effective solutions are not implemented. Granted that crime, violence and even war is not new in the country, there is a heightened fear hanging over the nation given that the attacks are, unprecedentedly, coming from almost all the regions of the country at once. The headlines of all Nigerian media are awash with daily news of an ongoing genocide in various patterns without any officially declared war. Against this background, this paper will attempt to unravel the drivers or root causes of the attacks in relation to the government's inability to provide adequate security to its populace. The study will also attempt to establish if these insurrections and unrests have defiled and destabilized the country's security apparatus. This is informed by the impression that the armed forces are overstretched and overwhelmed over fighting in various fronts simultaneously. The attempt of this

study to touch a little of almost every major violent uprising in Nigeria is done in a bid to establish a nexus between the spate of violence and perennial corrupt governance that has plagued Nigeria for many years.

## **2. Causes of violent uprisings in Nigeria**

Some of the common factors that have been blamed for the high spate of violence in Nigeria include: aggressive politics, land disputes, mineral resources, herders-farmers clashes, religious and ethnic dichotomy, and so on. It is expedient to mention that these are overt triggers of the menace. A more investigative look would reveal that some of the underlying drivers include the problem of widespread poverty, high degree of arms proliferation, imbalances in governance, etc. The problem of Nigeria grew out of high level of poverty, lopsided resource sharing and wealth control. Again, the socio-political structure of the Nigerian state creates tension, insecurity, instability, and countless agitation for restructuring, equity and justice [11]. In a bid to lay credence to the above assertion it was also argued that the eruption of multiple violence bedeviling security and the failure of Nigeria governance and political leadership have weakened the capacity of the country to sustain security in its territory and also subtly reducing its ability to help in maintaining regional peace and security. Some of the instances are discussed below [12].

## **3. The menace of arms proliferation**

The proliferation of firearms or Small and Light Weapons (SALWs) is described as a situation of unwarranted increase in the rate of illegal acquisition, transfer, storage and use of arms by individuals and groups within and across a territory, which undermines security, peace, political stability and also development. A common determinant of the materialization and escalation of the violent attacks in Nigeria is the wanton proliferation of firearms technically known as Small and Light Weapons (SALWs). This factor has been the main driving force or motivator of armed militancy and criminal attacks in the country. It is ostensibly so because without the clandestine procurement of arms and ammunition, the so-called aggressors would not have been able to carry out massacres of such magnitude. One of the features encouraging SALWs proliferation is its portability that makes it possible to be easily acquired, concealed, transferred, stored, maintained and deployed by criminals and dissidents. The ease of making it available spurs rebel or militant groups to resort to violent methods of expression. The choice to engage in violent attacks by militant and insurgent groups spirals into the high demand for SALWs which covertly increases its proliferation, especially in states with loose laws, corrupt institutions, weak security establishments and porous borders [13].

### ***Persistent Lopsided Leadership***

Another cog in the wheel lies within the ambit of Nigeria's political culture that is riddled with corruption. To a knowledgeable person, it would not pose any difficulty to deduce that Nigeria's nascent democracy is surrounded by many bottlenecks at the centre of which is the negative use of power and poor distribution of democracy dividends or the country's commonwealth. The lopsided use of the power of incumbency is overtly a perverse anomaly since it brandishes a picture of 'winner takes all' policies. Literally, the incumbency factor means unconstitutional or the unbridled power wielded by a holder of a high political office used to manipulate

state machineries and resources and deploy them to his selfish aggrandizement and against the opposition. This has remained a recurring decimal in all the elections conducted in the country since the return to democracy in 2003, 2007 and 2011. [14] By and large, the Nigerian political milieu cannot be complete without the mention of corruption, which is ever present and cuts across all its socio-political life. In this case, elected representatives are, more often than not, self-centered and do not have to embark on service-delivery to win or be returned in elections. This is a function of the fact that, being in government, they have the advantage of using state resources and this stance is helped by pervasive poverty among the citizenry who rarely take the consequence of their electoral actions into cognizance [15].

#### **4. High level of poverty syndrome**

Nigeria is one of the countries that are noted for the prevalence of absolute poverty in all its ramifications. For instance, Nigeria ranked 157 in Human Development index in 2007 while a survey by National Bureau of statistics in 2013 revealed a shocking figure of 70% of Nigerians as poor. Poverty in Nigeria is massive, pervasive and chronic, engulfing a large proportion of the society. Concern about poverty in Nigeria is great as the situation is ironical because it is a rich country inhabited by poor people [16]. There is therefore no gainsaying that the perennial poverty in Nigeria is at the root of most of the aggressive, violent attacks inherent in the country. On that note, poverty triggers frustration and frustration begets aggression in many cases. Despite great natural wealth, Nigerians are poor and social development is very slow. If present trends continue, the country is not likely to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Furthermore, some of the main problems hampering its progress comprise that all the people do not enjoy the same chance of prosperity. Again, the past and present governments in Nigeria do not focus on delivering essential public services; instead they assume control of major sources of national income. As a result, corruption thrived in public service and gained a strong foothold in society. Lastly, the environment in Nigeria is hostile to private enterprise, since it does not help businesses to generate jobs and create wealth. The plan for prosperity must address a startling paradox giving that more than two-thirds of the Nigerian people are poor; despite living in a country with huge potential wealth. Although revenues from crude oil have been increasing over the past years, Nigerians have been diving deeper into poverty. Back in 1980, it was estimated that 27 % of Nigerians were considered poor but by 1990, up to a whopping 70 % of the population are said to be living on less than \$1 per day [17].

#### **5. Conceptual Clarifications**

##### ***Insecurity***

As the term implies, insecurity is an antithesis of security. In ordinary parlance, it connotes a feeling of fear of the unknown, especially when there are life-threatening occurrences within the environment. Insecurity is regarded as a common feeling that almost everybody could experience at any point in life. It can emanate from various sources. It generally erodes ones confidence and creates anxiety and uncertainty. [18] In order to avert this, there should be zeal to work accurately to identify and address the menace. Reports by the American Psychological Association observed how multifaceted insecurity is. Accordingly, it has to do with an overall sense of anxiety or uncertainty about ones abilities, worth, skills, and value. Basically, it tends to convey a

message of risk or impending danger from someone or something. This negative feeling of insecurity could be emotional, physical or mental. Also, it can be cursed by general instability in that persons who experience traumatic and unexpected occurrences in their daily lives are more prone to a sense of insecurity [19]. In relation to our study, insecurity in Nigeria has gone astronomical. Some incidents among many buttress an assertion that the level of insecurity has assumed the dimension worse than a pandemic. According to *Premium Times* media report in January 2020, at least 245 persons lost their lives in violent attacks across the country. Also, within a period of two weeks - between May 27<sup>th</sup> and June 14<sup>th</sup> 2020 - it was reported that bandits have killed 60 persons in Sokoto, 81 in Gubio, 40 in Katsina, and 60 in Mongonu, located in Borno state. The mass killings that have occurred in Benue and Kaduna states recently were not added [20].

### ***Violence***

Violence is seen as the inflicting or causing of physical harm by one person on another that can result in pain or lead to death. Scholars like Galtung discuss violence in two perspectives of direct and structural violence. However, a more detailed typology has been adopted to include: physical, psychological, cultural and environmental violence. Physical violence refers to physical harm done directly to cause injuries or pain on a person or group. Thus, all intended acts of war, killings, brutality, genocide and maiming of any dimension are examples of physical violence.[21] The scope of our study will be limited to this kind of violence for easier analysis of the phenomenon under investigation. These include threats of banditry, communal conflicts, Boko Haram insurgency, kidnapping, armed robbery, cattle rustling, militancy, sea piracy, ethno-religious crisis, and herdsman–farmer conflicts that are replete with violent attacks.

### ***Security***

Significantly, Security is a concept that offers various meanings to scholars and practitioners. Its meanings are, somewhat, ambiguous since its area of coverage keep expanding over time. It has diversified into critical issues such as economic security, food security, national security, personal security and so on (Hughes 2006). Furthermore, it has to do with freedom from danger or a threat to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, which promotes its cherished values and legitimate interest and enhances the wellbeing of its people. Thus, internal security could be seen as the freedom from those attributes that undermine corporate existence and internal cohesion of a country and its ability to maintain vital institutions for the promotion of the core values and socio-political and economic objectives and also meeting the legitimate desires of the citizens [22]. As one of the major and more devastating threats to national security, terrorism has been described by the FBI (2006) as violent acts intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population and influence government policies or conducts through mass destructions, assassinations and kidnapping, which occur within or outside the territorial boundaries of a state. To be precise, terrorism is among the worst forms of violence, which involves a person or group of persons whose primary principles are characterized by utmost disregard for the rule of law in the state. More so, inter-ethnic or religious spirit of divisiveness, antagonism towards selected outer groups, attacks on the masses without cause and civil society organizations incitements and generally prefer to avert dialogue are some of their *modus operandi* [23] Terrorism is commonly used as a weapon by those that are not prepared to resort to legal means but employ the use of violence to achieve a desired illicit goal or objective [24].

## **6. Theoretical Framework**

The analytical framework of this paper is predicated upon the Frustration-Aggression theory. This was proposed by John Dollard, Neal Miller and his colleagues and was subsequently, further developed by Miller and his colleagues in 1941. Later in 1969, Leonard Berkowitz also took it to another level by asserting that frustration generally refers to a condition that sets in if a goal-oriented act is delayed or denied. In this instance, the causative factor remains even though the chances of realization are hindered by interfering influences [25]. Under these frustrating conditions, aggressive behavior is manifested to an extent that corresponds with the intensity of the source of frustration, which invariably blocks attainment of a goal. Aggression, on the other hand, is the deliberate attack on an organism or its alternative. It may be primarily directed toward the cause of frustration. Where this seems unattainable, it may be rechanneled toward any other people or softer targets [26]. The theory tries to explain why people bear the brunt of other people's wrongdoings [27]. It also strives to give an explanation as to the cause of violence because according to John Dollard and colleagues, frustration causes aggression and when the source of the frustration cannot be confronted or challenged, the aggression gets displaced onto a softer target. For example, if a man is insulted and humiliated at his work place by his boss, but cannot respond to this for fear of losing his job, he may go home and take out his anger and frustration on his family member(s). Some psychological researches have indicated that both frustrating and threatening events may generate feelings of aggression. This is based on the fact that one of the neural systems is responsible for carrying out the basic responses to threat. What this means is that the closer a frustrating stimulus is presented to us, the greater the chances our basic response systems will be activated and this will give rise to certain aggressive behaviors accordingly [28]. It may also be used to explain riots and revolutions. Both are caused by frustration emanating from poorer and more deprived sections of society who express their bottled up anger through violence. This perspective has had a great impact in real life situations and appears to have influenced Western thoughts on aggression than any other in history, basically, due to its uncomplicated and easy-to-understand structure [29]. From the foregoing discourse, one may readily deduce that the terrorists and other violent attackers in Nigeria who resort to killing innocent citizens show high levels of frustration. This impression stems from the fact that they seem powerless to the extent they cannot confront the object of their frustration (State power) hence they resort to a show of aggression by destroying the softer targets (innocent masses) which reaffirms the frustration-aggression approach. Frustration-Aggression theory maintains its utility as analysts continue to apply it to Nigerian complex conflict situations, such as the Boko Haram insurgency, Niger Delta militancy, and secessionist Biafra agitations in the Southeast and so on.

## **7. Methodology**

The qualitative method of data collection is adopted by this paper. Invariably, it depended on documented materials from secondary sources. The information so derived from this source will be used in the presentation and analysis of data in its attempt to ascertain and confirm the relationships among variables under investigation. To this end, table 1 below shows an excerpt from an endless list of massacres in Nigeria, in various occasions, from the inception of the new millennium till date. Unfortunately, some of the massacres were carried out by the state security agencies in reprisal attacks, involving the killing of even the innocent citizens. These cleavages include cases of political violence, bandits and Fulani herdsmen killings, etc.



**Table 1:** Some Violent Attacks in Nigeria, 2000 – 2021

Caption	Location	Date	No. of Deaths	Notes
Kaduna riots	Kaduna	21 Feb to 23 May, 2000	2000-5000	Religious riots between Christians and Muslims over the introduction of sharia law in Kaduna State.
Jos riots	Jos	07-09-2001 to 17-09-2001	500-5000	Religious riots between Christians and Muslims.
Zaki Biam Massacre	Benue state	20-10-2001 to 24-10-2001	Over 200	Attack by Nigerian Army avenging the kidnapping and killing of 19 soldiers by suspected Tiv militia
Ogaminana massacre	Kogi state	26-02-2008	Over 50	Attack by the Police killing and brutalizing mostly elderly men, women and children in a reprisal attack.
Jos riots	Plateau state	28, 29-11-2008, and 2010	381 and 992	Religious riots between Christians and Muslims over the result of a local election. Muslims killed Christians.
Boko Haram uprising	Maiduguri, Bauchi, Potiskum, etc	26,29-07-2009	Over 1000	Islamic militants killed many people. Christians were killed for refusing to convert to Islam.
Abuja UN office bombing	Abuja	26-08-2011	116	312 injured; Boko Haram attacked the United Nations compound.
Baga massacre	Baga, Borno	19,20-04-2013	Over 228	Identity of the perpetrators remains unclear; some say the Nigerian military while others blame Boko Haram.
Yobe State Shooting	Mamudo Gov.Sec.school	06-07-2013	30	Suspected Boko Haram terrorists killed at least 41 children and one teacher.
Killing of Biafran Protesters	Onitsha and Aba, Igboland	30-08-2015 to 09-02-2016	Over 80	Protesters agitating for the secession of Biafra from Nigeria were killed en masse by Nigerian security operatives.
Zaria massacre	Zaria	12,13-12-2015	700-1000	Nigerian army open fire on the Shiite minority when they were conducting a religious procession.
Christmas Day shootings	Abuja	25-12-2012	27	Islamic militants attacked a church on Christmas Day and set it on fire.
Koshebe massacre	Jere, Maiduguri	28-11-2020	76	Boko Haram massacred 76 farmers for cooperating with the Nigerian military.
Bandit attacks	Across States in Northwest, Nigeria	21-05-2019 to 03-06-2021	298	Attacks were perpetrated for various reasons by the bandits.
Bandit attacks	Igangan, Oyo state	05-06-2021	50	A group of Fulani bandits invaded and killed 50 Yoruba people in their sleep.
Farmer-Herdsman Crisis	Plateau state	25-06-2018	86	Riots between Muslim herders and Christian farmers.
Religious conflict	Kaduna state	19-10-2018	55	A market dispute led to the deaths of two people. Adaras attacked Hausa in a reprisal conflict and killed 55 people.
Fulani Herdsman crisis	Kajuru, Kaduna State	10,11-02-2019	141 (130 Fulani and 11 Adara)	2019 Kaduna State massacre: Part of the communal violence leading up to the 2019 election.
Herdsman attacks	Tegina Kabata, Shiroro, Niger state.	12-4-2020	12	12 Christians killed during a wedding with five people captured including the bride and groom.
Herdsman	Kajuru & other	26-02-2019	137	Reprisal attacks and killing of Adara

Attacks on the Adara	places in Kaduna State	to 16-03-2019	people in a series of communal/religious conflicts.
----------------------	------------------------	---------------	---

Source: Wikipedia (2021) @[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/list\\_of\\_massacres\\_in\\_Nigeria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/list_of_massacres_in_Nigeria). (Edited by the author)

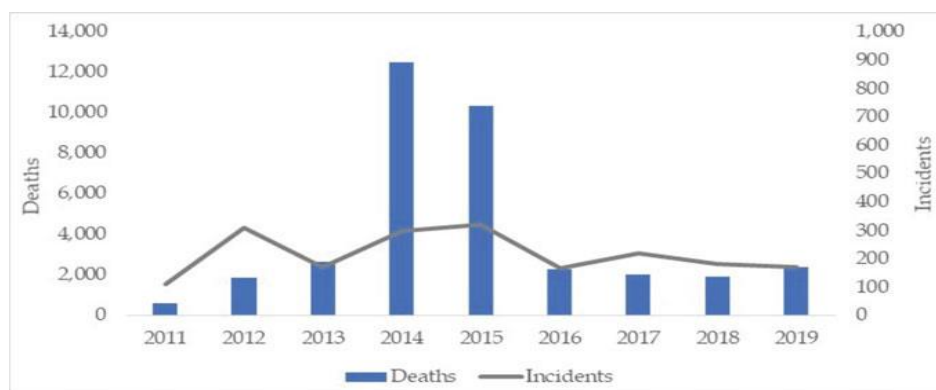
Table 2 provides data for of a comprehensive number of deaths that occurred in Nigeria within the past ten years. Here the number attached to the state actor is deaths that were executed extra-judicially by the country’s armed forces. The rest came from terrorist and separatist attacks with an overall total of 68,795 deaths.

**Table 2:** Number of violent deaths caused by political instability and citizen alienation in Nigeria: 2011 - 2021.

Perpetrator	Number of deaths
State actor	11,490
Boko Haram	17,957
Boko Haram, State actor	21,133
Sectarian actor	11,204
Other armed actor	7,011
<b>Total</b>	<b>68,795</b>

Source: Statista, 2021

As earlier mentioned, one of the major and most devastating political conflicts in Nigeria after the Biafra-Nigeria war (1967-1970) is the Boko Haram terrorist insurgency, which has claimed tens of thousands of lives and still counting. Figure 1 below is a graphic representation of the levels of killings by the Islamic militants from 2011- 2019 in their desperate bid to establish an Islamic State in Northeast region of the country. From the chart, it can easily be noticed that the attacks hit their peak in 2014 and 2015, and then came down the following year (2016) probably due to intensified military onslaught against the insurgents by the Nigerian army and air-force. But the killings, gradually, started rising again in 2019 due to the withdrawal of good number of military personnel to fight in some other violent uprisings in Nigeria.

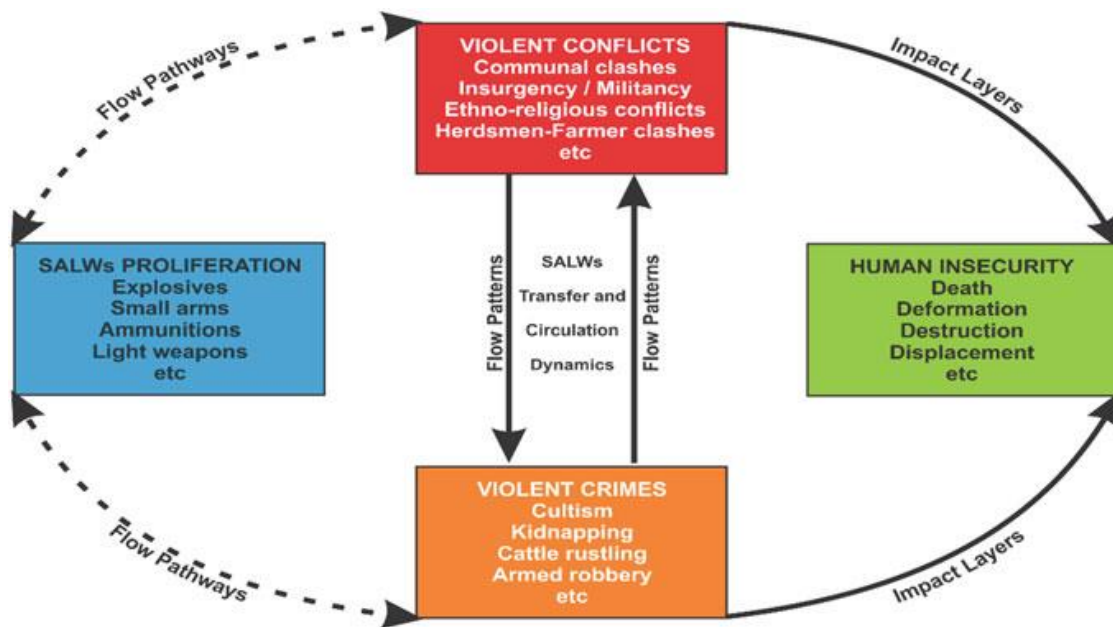


**Figure 1:** Incidents and Death toll from the Boko Haram insurgency, 2011–2019

Source: Allen (2019) [30]

It has been observed that terrorism has seriously undermined Nigerian national security in that it has come to be

used as a political weapon to fight the government in order to yield to their demand and has caused political instability. Again, it has shown the ineptitude of the Nigerian government in fashioning out reasonable conflict resolution mechanism to curb terrorist activities rather than monetary bargaining for a truce. Moreover, terrorists' activities have almost reduced Nigeria into a failed state due mainly to the height of endangered security of its citizens that cannot be guaranteed in the face of wanton destruction of lives and properties. Also, there is much epileptic development in both public and private sectors of her economy [31]. The diagram (Fig. 2) below showcases the trends and pathways in the proliferation of the arms and ammunition fuelling and sustaining violent attacks and crimes on Nigerian citizens. As depicted in the diagram, firearms (also known as Small and Light Weapons) proliferation has engendered most of the violent attacks in different regions of Nigeria including militancy and insurgency. This feature has led to the sustenance of conflicts, disruption of peace, internal population displacements, derailment of livelihoods and economic progress. The consistency of these armed attacks informs the dynamics of SALWs and the easy availability of these weapons in the larger society perpetuates the culture of violence in Nigeria [13].



**Figure 2:** SALWs Proliferation, Armed violence and Human insecurity dynamics

Source: Onuoha and Ezirim (2020: 76) [32]

Notably, the flagrant proliferation of the SALWs not only drives the dynamics of insurgency and militancy, it also sustains the persistent occurrence and deadliness of most violent crimes that infringe on human security. The complex connection between SALWs proliferation and the escalation of criminal violence is a major contributor to the level of insecurity in the country. It is not easy to estimate the actual number of illegal SALWs making their rounds in Nigeria at any giving time, but it can be agreeable that weapons proliferation has turned out to be seen as a cause and also consequence of insecurity in Nigeria. [33] [34] Media reports in Nigeria is replete with gruesome news of some sophisticated SALWs confiscated by law enforcement agents on daily basis. In this case, the news has it that as much as 21,548,608 arms and ammunition were illicitly brought into

Nigeria at the last quarter of 2017 [35].

The weapons were smuggled into the Niger delta via Nigeria's maritime borders, which are very porous. The various types of weapons that were available included revolvers, pistols, AK-47, hunting rifles, craft weapons, shotguns and (light) machine guns such as Beretta 12S and AR-70, MAT 49, the Czech machine guns Sten MK 2, Czech Model 26 and Model 59 (Rachot), MG 36, Tokarev TT and Marakov PM pistols, the German G3, the Belgian FN-FAL, and the Serbian RPGs, mostly supplied by clandestine dealers. As it were, militant groups in the Niger Delta traded crude oil obtained through bunkering for these illegal arms and ammunition within some hidden beaches. [36] Some of the weapons made available to militant groups are sourced from local fabrication. Local SALW is mainly used by armed groups since they are relatively not regulated and considerably of lower cost than imported ones obtainable at the black market [37].

## **8. Gross Security Breakdown**

Owing to the unprecedented level of violent attacks on Nigerian security agents, armed forces and ordinary citizens over time, there is a noticeable breakdown in security of lives and property in the country. To this extent, the army and police, whether at road check- points or their stations are attacked and murdered at random. This so happens because they are always taken unawares by the gunmen. The proliferation of small arms and ammunitions is driving the increasing rate of violence in Nigeria. In the interim, the number of small arms in the country is estimated at 6,145,000 while the armed forces and law enforcement agents account for 586,600 firearms. The SBM intelligence report said that this has had tremendous impact on internal security and led to deaths emanating from, but not limited to insurgencies, cultism, communal clashes, militancy, herdsman-farmers conflict, and religious related attacks. In recent times, the armed uprising in the Southeast has recorded a high spate of police and army killings leading the security personnel to heightened fear of losing their lives. Consequent upon this, most of them do not wear uniforms anymore, especially when they are moving alone on the road. Alternatively, the local vigilante groups are now in vogue as most states in the country establish such outfits in an attempt to provide security that has not been very effective [38].

From the foregoing, it is becoming clearer that Nigeria is not at peace in all ramifications. It is also pertinent to restate that this anomaly is not novel to the country. What is actually new is that, unlike in the 1960s when the agitation was coming from one section of the country, currently almost every geopolitical zone in the country has one grudge or the other resulting in violent uprisings, terrorism and crimes of different dimensions that seems intractable. Presently, the government is overtly confused as to how best to handle these problems and therefore resorts to outright extrajudicial killing spree of suspected outlaws. This option rather fuels the violence instead of addressing them. This view is supported when it was posited that security is not found in terms of nation state might but in terms of holistic understanding that moves beyond the currency of military power which state a key factor [39]. Moreover, the Nigerian security policy seemingly lacks the required capabilities in form of economic industry, political, technology, etc., to fashion out a strong national security and defense structures, which might make Nigeria to be exposed to threatening challenges that could militate against her independence and development as an entity. Again, it appears there is an absence of a policy framework to coordinate its national interest in line with the resources on ground that has rendered her defense policy to be

ridiculed in the presence of terrorism [31]. The objective of this paper revolves around these situations reviewed so far.

## **9. Ways of Addressing Violent Upsurge in Nigeria**

The need to stem the colossal challenge of deadly violence and criminality in Nigeria has been stressed by many scholarly works. These have not practically yielded much fruit due to the fact that some factors at the centre or root of the hostilities are not addressed by the government, holistically. As revealed by our study, the government has been handling the scourge peripherally by electing to suppress the violent uprisings through attacking and killing anybody within the vicinity of the criminals. This method had always yielded temporary or no results as the assailants regroup and attack again and again. Towing this line of thought, it has been argued that the tactics employed by government security agencies against Boko Haram terrorists, for instance, have consistently been brutal and counterproductive. Their chosen style of extrajudicial execution as a tactic in handling many problems in Nigeria not only created Boko Haram as it is now, but also fuel its expansion like others. [1] Against this backdrop, the study posits that until the salient factors behind the attacks are addressed, the end to these massacres may never come. In this vein, some solutions will be proffered, thematically, to address each category of the violence and other contributory factors as follows:

**Political Terrorism:** Global dynamics has shown that terrorism is not easy to eradicate. One of their *modus operandi* is that the insurgents do not welcome negotiation, dialogue or amnesty of any kind. In Nigeria, the Boko Haram group had been offered these options in the past which they turned down. The country has no other option left than to engage them in armed combat resulting only in reduction and not total eradication. To this end, the paper suggests that the government, having spent a huge chunk of its annual budgets on the fight against terrorism without success, should channel reasonable part of its resources to uncover and uproot their internal and external sponsors such as the Islamic State of Iraq Syria (ISIS). Failure to do this will be tantamount to treating the symptoms and not cause of a disease.

**Banditry:** This criminal uprising, which has been raging progressively in the Northwest region of Nigeria could be likened to the Niger Delta militancy; though more complex. Their widespread criminal activities have taken many lives and sacked communities across the region causing the astronomical rise in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country. The groups are so many and everything about them is clandestine since they engage in robbery, kidnapping, shooting and killing their victims. Just like the Niger Delta militants, they should be offered amnesty and ordered to submit their weapons. During this move, the government should honestly spell out lofty programs that will benefit all the militants in that region. This might encourage them to surrender giving that their problem is resource-based.

**Fulani Herdsmen crisis:** The Fulani-herdsmen and farmers conflict has been one of the most difficult and topical issues needing lasting solution in Nigeria. Being essentially nomads and oblivious of developmental trends around them, the herdsmen feel threatened if their only source of livelihood is attacked. These cleavages have triggered hatred and resentment for the group in all regions of the country. Recently, all the southern states enacted anti- open-grazing laws to control the menace that has been claiming uncountable lives and destroying

properties worth billions of naira. However, the only option remains the development of ranges as practiced in all civilized societies, globally. The government of the day should map out lands in the north due to its possession of vast landmass and re-grass same as ranches for the herdsmen. The daily running of these ranches will equally generate employment opportunities for the communities where they are located.

**Militancy:** The current spate of militancy experienced in the south-east and south-south regions of the country was least expected. It took off by vandalizing and breaking a Prison facility in Imo state by unknown gunmen, resulting in the escape of many inmates. Since then, there have been many reports of killing of some army personnel and law enforcement agents, especially the police. The attacks cut across all the states in the south-east and some in the south-south. Many people attribute these attacks to the ongoing agitation for the state of Biafra. Since this is deemed political, the government should press harder for a renegotiation of the issues with the insurgents or relevant stakeholders and offer amnesty that will be honestly fulfilled.

**Arms proliferation:** As already confirmed, the illegal arms trafficking and smuggling of all types of guns from various sources has been behind the exacerbation of violent attacks in Nigeria. It has been estimated that these illegal firearms could outnumber those apportioned to law enforcement agents, in which case they are, in most cases, overpowered in shootouts with the criminals who wield more sophisticated weapons. Without doubt, the country has many porous borders because they are predominantly manned by corrupt customs, immigration and police officials who are 'settled' most of the times with money. There may be no end to the flooding of the country with illegal arms and ammunition until there is stringent border control by less-corrupt officials. At least, that could help to reduce the smuggling to the lowest ebb.

**Poverty:** It is no gainsaying that poverty is endemic in Nigeria and happens to be the crux behind all manifested violence as depicted by our study. Different programs have been implemented in the past in a bid to reduce the level of the poverty scourge by various regimes. This notwithstanding, poverty has worsened owing to the gross ineptitude of the government officials who, to a large extent, are playing lip-service as regards the problem. Many commentators have posited that Nigeria is a rich country, paradoxically, inhabited by poor masses. The reason for this is not far-fetched because evidences have shown that the leaders utilize the commonwealth to corruptly enrich themselves to the detriment of the poor masses. Job creation and employment does not, essentially, rely on university degrees but on skills acquisition. Therefore, the government has to seriously create conducive programs and enabling environment that enhance employment for the youth to get this group off the streets and reduce hopelessness amongst them in a battered economy. If this is achieved, the propensity to join criminal gangs will naturally die down and reduce attacks.

## **10. Conclusion**

So far, the paper has attempted to unravel some of the root causes cum drivers of perennial violent conflicts in Nigeria that claim a great number of human lives on daily basis. Worthy of note is that the degree of insecurity is very high to the extent the average law enforcement agent is as frightened as the ordinary civilian. This has translated into loss of confidence in the system among the citizens. The speculation in many quarters is that if the situation continues unabated, the country might metamorphose into a failed state status. To prevent such, all

hands should be on deck to practically create means of addressing the underlying forces as recommended above, instead of sweeping them under the carpet. However, law enforcement should not be ignored at any cost because that will be the ‘last straw’.

## References

- [1] Walker, Andrew (2012). What Is Boko Haram? United States Institute of Peace, Special Report: 308. @ [www.usip.org](http://www.usip.org)
- [2] Amaza, Mark (2020). Nigeria is also losing control of its troubled northwest region, **QUARTZ: Nov. 24.**
- [3] Brenner, Claire (2021). Combating Banditry in Northwest Nigeria, American Security Project, Mar. 19.
- [4] Odinkalu, Chidi Anselm (2018). Banditry in Nigeria: A brief history of a long war, The Punch Newspaper, Dec. 27.
- [5] United Nations OCHA Services (2021). Gunmen era in Nigeria, Relief Web, May 27. @ [www.reliefweb.int...](http://www.reliefweb.int...) [Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> Jun., 2021)
- [6] Ajodo-Adebanjoko, A. (2017). Towards Ending Conflict and Insecurity in the NigerDelta Region: A Collective Non-Violent Approach, African Journal on Conflict Resolution, 17 (1), 9–27.
- [7] Bekoe, D. (2005). Strategies for Peace in the Niger Delta, Peace Brief, United States Institute of Peace @ <https://www.usip.org/publications/2005/12/strategies-> (Accessed 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2021).
- [8] Onuoha, F. C. (2008). The Transformation of Conflicts in the Niger Delta, In H. A. Saliu, I.O. Taiwo, R. A. Seniyi, B. Salawu, & A. Usman (Eds.), *Nigeria Beyond 2007: Issues, Perspectives and Challenges* (pp. 263–283). Ilorin: Faculty of Business and Social Sciences, University of Ilorin.
- [9] Akpaneyen, Etini (2021). "Unknown gunmen": Police lost at least 13 officers for Southern Nigeria weekend attacks, BBC News, May 10.
- [10] Arogbonlo, Israel (2021). Attack on Sunday Igboho’s country home barbaric, Vanguard News Nigeria, Jul. 2.
- [11] Uwaifo Samuel Osaretin (2019). Biafra agitation and politics of imbalance in Nigeria, *Journal of Civil & Legal Sciences*, 8: 265, Vol 8(2).
- 
- [12] Onuoha, F. C., Okafor, J. C. & Femi-Adedayo, O. O. (2021). Nigeria: Militancy, Insurgency and the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapon, In Usman Tar and Charles P. Onwurah (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Small Arms and Conflicts in Africa*, Chapter 37.

- [13] Ekemenah, A. (2013). National Security and the Menace of Weapon Proliferation in Nigeria. Business World. @<http://businessworldng.com/web/articles/>. (Accessed 15 Jul., 2021)
- 
- [14] Chukwuemeka, Emma E.O. (2012). Obstacles to Nigeria Political Development: A Critical Evaluation, @ <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268004158>.
- [15] Bola, D. A. (2011) "Social Policy: A bag on the path" Nigerian Management Review, 5(2) 13-18.
- 
- [16] Odusola, A. F. (1997). Conceptual and theoretical issues in poverty, International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management, UK: Rochester. p.121
- [17] International Monetary Fund (2005). Nigeria: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper - National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, Country Report No. 05/433, December.
- [18] Patterson, Eric (2021). Insecurity: Definition, Causes, and seven ways to cope. @ [www.choosingtherapy.com](http://www.choosingtherapy.com) (Retrieved 2<sup>nd</sup> Aug. 2021)
- [19] Yaacob, Mohd Jamil (2021). Insecurity, Smarter Health, Penang: KPJ Malaysia.
- 
- [20] Onyibe, Magnus (2020). Insecurity of life and property in Nigeria may be worse than COVID-19 pandemic, The Nation Newspaper, Jun. 15
- [21] Udegbonam, K.C.W. (2017). Basic concepts in peace and conflict studies, In Onu, A.O., Eze, J. E., and Udegbonam, K.C.W.(eds.) Social Science Perspectives of Peace and Conflict, Vol. 2, pp 21-40, Enugu: Grand Heritage Global Communication. P.27
- [22] Ogaba, O. (2010). Security, Globalization and Climate Change: A Conceptual Analysis, In E. E. Osita & O. Ogaba (Eds.), Security in Nigeria (pp. 28-39), Lagos: NIIA.
- [23] Awoniyi, O.H. (2002). The search for terrorists: A case study of the council of Ulama of Nigeria, Lagos: Centre for Religion and Public Issues, Policy Advocacy Series1. Institute of Peace @ <https://www.usip.org/publications/>- (Accessed 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2021).
- [24] Woods, T. R. T. (1983). Violent Terror, New York City: KSS Publication.
- [25] Dollard, J., Miller, N. E., Doob, L.W., Mowrer, Orval H., & Sears, R. R. (1939). Frustration and Aggression, New Haven, CT, US: Yale University Press.
- 
- [26] Grimm, J. (2008). The International Encyclopedia of communication, Wiley Online Library.
- [27] Whitley, Bernard E., Kite, Mary E. (2009). The psychology of prejudice and discrimination, (2nd ed.) Belmont, California: Wadsworth.
-



- [28] Berkowitz, Leonard (1974). Some determinants of impulsive aggression: Role of mediated associations with reinforcements from aggression, *Psychological Review*, 81: 165–176.
- [29] Selig, H. (1971). *The making of aggression*, New York: The Free Press.
- 
- [30] Allen, N. (2019). How Boko Haram has regained the initiative and what Nigeriashould do to stop it, War on the Rocks. @ <https://warontherocks.com>.
- [31] Bodunde, D. O. & Balogun, N.O. (2019). An Overview of the Nigerian Defense Policyand the Challenges against Terrorism, *Open Journal of Political Science: Vol.9, No.3*.
- 
- [32] Onuoha, F. C., & Ezirim, G. E. (2020). *Small Arms Proliferation*, In C. Varin & F.C. Onuoha (Eds.), *Security in Nigeria*, London: Bloomsbury
- [33] Onuoha, F. C. (2011). *Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation and Human Security in Nigeria*. *Conflict Trends*, 1, 50–56.
- [34] Aghedo, I., & Osumah, O. (2015). *The Insurgency in Nigeria: A Comparative Study of Niger Delta and Boko Haram Uprisings*. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 50(2), 208–222.
- [35] Adenubi, T. (2018). 21 Million Guns, Ammo Smuggled into Nigeria—Investigation, *Tribune*.@<http://www.tribuneonlineng.com/21-million-guns-ammo-smuggled-nigeria-investigation/>. (Accessed 11<sup>th</sup> Sep. 2021)
- [36] Bestman, W. (2007). *Weapons of War in the Niger Delta*, *Terrorism Monitor*, 5(10), 8–10.
- [37] Duquet, N. (2011). *Swamped with Weapons: The Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Niger Delta*. In C. Obi, & S. A. Rustad (Eds.), *Oil and Insurgency in the Niger Delta: Managing the Complex Politics of Petro-Violence* (pp. 136–149). London: Zed Books.
- [38] Omilana, Timieyin (2020). *How proliferation of small arms is enhancing violence in Nigeria*. *Guadian Newspapers*, Oct. 26.
- [39] Galtung, J. (1975). *Peace, Research, Education, Action*. Vol. 1 of *Essay in Peace Research*. Copenhagen: Ejlers.