

---

*Original Paper*

## The Proliferation of Non-State Armed Groups and Human Security in Nigeria: A Nation at a Crossroads

James E. Archibong<sup>1</sup> & Anthony Ekpouo<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Jurisprudence and International Law, Faculty of Law, University of Calabar, Nigeria

E-mail: jarchibong11@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Department of Commercial and Industrial Law, Faculty of Law, University of Calabar, Nigeria

### Abstract

The oldest and simplest justification for government is the security and welfare of citizens. To achieve this purpose, the government employs, trains, funds, and equips the army and a police force. Nigeria has in recent years been plagued by violence perpetrated by a multiplicity of non-state armed groups among them insurgents, bandits, separatists, and criminal gangs. Critical public infrastructure has been destroyed, among them power stations, oil installations, and security facilities. People live in constant fear of being kidnapped and killed. Individuals have been abducted from homes, marketplaces, driveways, and public highways across the country, forcing many to flee their homes and abandon businesses. Farmers pay taxes to bandits before accessing their farms. Attacks on schools have left about one million children with little or no access to education. About two million people have been displaced and cannot fend for themselves. The impact on the economy is enormous, threatening food security and means of livelihood. These crimes are driven by a profusion of socio-economic factors such as high unemployment, poverty, failure of governance, and availability of small arms. This paper examines the protracted cycle of violence and its impact on human security in Nigeria. It finds that successive governments have failed in their primary purpose of providing security and ensuring the welfare of the people. It recommends that the government should evolve policies to address Nigeria's harsh socio-economic conditions, create jobs, and reduce poverty. The government should eliminate illegal arms in circulation and tackle corruption in the security services.

**Keywords:** Banditry, violence, insecurity, Nigeria, government

### Introduction

In every society and area of human endeavor, security is essential. Security was derived from the national security concept before the 1994 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Later, this perspective changed to human security, making the safety of people within the state the main topic of discussion (UNDP, 1994). Because organized non-state actors frequently commit violent crimes in Nigeria, human security has become a crucial concern and a hot topic of discussion. Nigeria is a prosperous nation with abundant natural and human resources. Regrettably, it has been beset by various security issues that arise every day around the nation.

For many years, non-state armed groups (NSAGs) have been active in Nigeria. A current depiction of a violent gang that unleashed mayhem on the state on the basis of religious conviction and brainwashing is vividly depicted by the Maitatsine movement of the 1970s and early 1980s. Muhammad Marwa, a controversial preacher who opposed cars, radios, and other material goods, started the organization. His teachings garnered a sizable militant following, primarily from young people and jobless individuals. Armed conflicts between his supporters and state security forces broke out by 1980, killing almost 5,000 people, including Marwa. Non-state armed groups operating under various names in all parts of the country have been responsible for the widespread violence and insecurity that have afflicted Nigeria in recent years. Depending on their philosophy, goals, motivations, and methods of operation, these

groups are classified as terrorists, criminal gangs, insurgents, bandits, and separatists.

While the Maitatsine violence was primarily limited to the northern region and motivated by religious beliefs, the current statewide assault is supported by a number of concerns, including marginalization, violent ideology, self-determination, poor governance, and access to natural resources. Bandits, terrorists, kidnappers, armed herders, cultists, and unidentified shooters are just a few of the criminal organizations and armed groups that have spread throughout the nation over time, harming, destroying, and killing innocent people. These organizations have held the nation hostage over their agitations, ranging from the Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC) and the Yoruba Nation, which seek statehood for the Yoruba people of western Nigeria, to the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and, more recently, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), which seeks to restore the former state of Biafra. Because of the exploitative and destructive practices of international oil companies, militancy has been rampant in Nigeria's Niger Delta region for a long time. A number of armed organizations, like the Avengers and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), started destroying oil pipelines and other facilities, abducting and murdering oil workers, and engaging in armed conflicts with state security forces. In 2009, a jihadist group called Boko Haram took up weapons against the government to establish an Islamic government in areas of northern Nigeria, while the government was attempting to negotiate a ceasefire, amnesty, and rehabilitation of the militants in the Niger Delta.

Lakurawa, a group affiliated with terrorists in the Sahel, especially those from Mali and the Niger Republic, is the most recent to enter the arena of violence (Ojo & Olumba, 2024). At first, the terror group's members set up camps in a few villages that bordered the Niger Republic and Nigeria (Salman et al., 2024). Eventually, they established camps in several Sokoto, Kebbi, and Bauchi State local government areas. Between 1,500 and 1,800 people make up this mobile organization, which has been targeting towns in a bid to extort money. These armed non-state entities have recently flourished in Nigeria, surpassing all government-imposed red lines. They now represent the biggest threat to national security due to their increased size, power, and ferocity. Socioeconomic problems like poverty, unemployment, and corruption have pushed thousands of young Nigerians to rebel against the government and commit crimes.

Human security as well as the peace, stability, and development of communities throughout Nigeria have been seriously threatened by non-state actors' unchecked proliferation and simple access to small arms and light weaponry. Many people fear that terrorists may kidnap and kill them. To gain access to their farms, some farmers have paid levies to bandits, while hundreds of farmers have been slaughtered on their farms. Schools have been demolished, and thousands of instructors and kids have died.

This essay examines the growth of non-state armed groups, the harm they cause to Nigerian human security, and the instability they cause through their illicit activities. This is because the security and well-being of the populace are the main goals of government, as stated in Section 14(2)(b) of the 1999 Nigerian constitution. In the face of persistent attacks by robbers and rebels, the Nigerian government seems helpless. To guarantee the safety and well-being of its citizens, the government needs to adjust its policies and develop new tactics.

### **Non-state actors' challenge to the state's monopoly on violence**

The monopoly on violence, or the exclusive right to employ physical force legally, is granted to states by contemporary public law. Max Weber, a German sociologist, asserts that the state is the only body with the authority to use, threaten, or permit physical force against anybody inside its borders. Weber's claim is consistent with the idea of sovereignty established by the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, which acknowledged states' rights to use their security forces to defend their borders and uphold law and order. Since nations entrust their military forces, police, and other public institutions with this responsibility, they are the ultimate guardians of the authorized use of force. This international legal and political order is also acknowledged by the United Nations, which was established in 1945 and bases its Charter on the idea of state sovereignty.

Non-state armed organizations have effectively contested governments' exclusive use of force and undermined the Westphalia idea of sovereignty in the context of modern international and national

security architecture. Private players on the battlefield have been a phenomenon since the beginning of time and have grown throughout history. These armed groups, which operate outside of state control and authority, include warlords, militias, insurgents, terrorists, and criminal organizations. They utilize violence to accomplish their objectives. They are the result of poor leadership and weak regimes' incapacity to maintain the loyalty of their populace. In certain cases, they have some degree of territorial authority, which threatens state governance and erodes sovereignty.

### **Non-state actors with weapons that operate in Nigeria**

Nigeria has several different types of armed groups, including terrorists, bandits, cults, separatists, robbers, kidnappers, insurgents, and killer herders. These are criminal organizations or individuals who use violence to achieve their objectives and function outside of the state's jurisdiction. Some of the groups, such as Boko Haram, hold territory, have flexible command systems, and have political goals. While some armed organizations, such as the bandits in northern Nigeria, operate in the state's rural areas, others are found in their cities (Bala et al, 2022). Profit from illegal activities including drug trafficking, the arms trade, and kidnapping for ransom—which frequently lead to violent altercations and fatalities—usually serves as their motivator. It is common for certain groups to target military targets, while others choose to target civilian infrastructure and people. They can impede government initiatives, endanger communities, and traffic in light and small arms weaponry. Armed organizations typically target civilians with their actions, undermining efforts at national reconciliation and peacebuilding through a variety of heinous deeds. Insecurity is a problem that Nigeria is now facing throughout the nation.

The Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), Niger Delta Liberation Front, Niger Delta Vigilante, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Red Egbesu Water Lions, and Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) were among the violent organizations (Steffen, 2016). These organizations have a history of targeting and demolishing vital infrastructure, including oil pipelines (Tanko, 2021). They closed oil terminals to bring the government's attention to the people's predicament and abducted foreign oil workers to spark international outrage. About 30,000 militants in the Niger Delta were disarmed, demobilized, and reintegrated as a result of the 2009 amnesty program implemented by the late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua's administration (Tanko, 2021; Austine & Sunday, 2013). Despite this, a large number of ex-militants continue to engage in illegal operations like piracy, oil theft, and maritime kidnapping.

In many regions of the nation, herder-farmer conflicts center on access to resources such as cultivable land, grazing areas, and water (Daniel, 2023). The violence began in the northwest and eventually extended to the north-central region and other regions of the country between Fulani herders and non-Fulani Hausa sedentary farmers. The main causes of the dispute are the cattle's access to grazing land and the devastation of farming crops (Tanko, 2021). Over time, the two groups' conflict over land resources has gotten worse and their relationship has soured. Armed herdsmen attacks have spread throughout the nation and become well-planned and highly skilled. Their acts of violence have resulted in severe security issues for the nation and a massive human cost, with thousands of innocent people killed (Daniel, 2023). Armed herders have killed thousands of people and forced thousands more to flee their homes in various parts of the country. They have also been linked to many criminal activities, including kidnapping for ransom and banditry.

Since Boko Haram began to rebel against the government in July 2009, Nigeria has been dealing with a bloody, violent, and armed insurgency (Foyou et al, 2018). Boko Haram, which is firmly established in the northeastern Nigerian states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa as well as portions of Chad, Niger, and northern Cameroon, has attacked private property and public infrastructure repeatedly in several northern Nigerian regions. In 2012, Ansaru, a branch of Boko Haram, declared their loyalty to the global terrorist organization al Qaeda. The Islamic State in West Africa (ISWAP) split from Boko Haram in 2016. The goal of these sects is the same: to use violence to establish an Islamic state (Tanko, 2021).

An increasing number of armed groups and indigenous militias are involved in banditry (Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2017). Up to 30,000 outlaws are thought to be part of organized armed gangs, or "Bandits," which commit violent crimes mainly for financial gain. These groups are believed to have over 100

factions (Buba, 2023). They have invaded and taken over areas in various parts of northwestern and north-central Nigeria and are notoriously destructive and bloodthirsty. In the states of Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina, Plateau, and Niger, they are quite active. They have advanced weaponry capable of causing significant harm in addition to using small arms. An Alfa jet, a Nigerian fighter plane, was shot down by bandits in Zamfara State in July 2021 (Aljazeera, 19 July 2021). In addition to attacking villages and communities, robbing them, and killing people, they also extort money, abduct individuals for ransom, and steal cattle (Tanko, 2021). In Zamfara State, bandits are also alleged to be involved in illicit mining, and efforts to apprehend them have incited violent outbursts. Bandits adjudicate disputes and impose taxes and levies on the local population in areas they dominate (Anyadike, 2023). To gain access to their farms and prevent attacks, the most severely impacted villages provide the bandits protection money.

For a while now, growing separatism in the south-west and south-east has taken on a violent aspect (Tanko, 2021). Anambra, Imo, Ebonyi, Abia, and Enugu are the five states in southeast Nigeria that are fighting for their independence. The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) was at the vanguard of these efforts. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), another separatist organization, has joined calls for the independence of states in the southeast (Onime, 2018). In late 2020, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), an armed wing of IPOB, was established (Campbell & Quinn, 2021). The five eastern states are also home to other organized armed gangs known as "Unknown Gunmen." Targeting the government and security forces, they have wreaked havoc on the area. Since the federal government arrested and detained IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu, violence involving the ESN and "Unknown Gunmen" has increased (Tanko, 2021). In 2017, the federal authorities declared IPOB to be a terrorist organization. Militant groups in the south-south region started violent clashes to demand independence for the Bakassi Peninsula because they were against its handing over to Cameroon. One of the groups advocating for independence is the Bakassi Movement for Self-Determination (BAMOSD).

The primary separatist organization in the southwest vying for the Yoruba people's homeland is the Oodua Peoples' Congress. Another separatist group, the "Yoruba Nation," led by Mr. Sunday Igboho, has been advocating for the creation of an independent state in the southwest called the Oodua Republic, although their activities have slowed. They have used violence to further their objectives in a number of instances. Some gang members have recently been put on trial for five counts of conspiracy, unlawful firearm possession, unlawful assembly, treasonable felony, and treason (Adeniran, 2024).

The majority of cult groups, commonly referred to as "confraternities," are located in Nigerian educational institutions. The groups, which were established in 1952 at some southern Nigerian colleges, function covertly and are bound by an oath of secrecy. Originally limited to students attending postsecondary institutions, secondary school pupils are now recruited into cult groups. Both male and female students are eligible to join. The Vikings, Black Axe, Buccaneers, Eiyee, and other feared organizations are examples of these cult groups (Oyibo, 2020).

The command and leadership structures of cult groups are hierarchical. They also have codes, symbols, words, and secret signs. Members of the group are promised security from other groups, among other things (Oyibo, 2020). Following conflicts with competing cult organizations, they have been charged with involvement in extreme violence, murders, and criminal activity. Cult groups are officially prohibited in Nigeria. However, they are found throughout the nation and have infiltrated all spheres of society (Billebault, 2023).

### **Factors contributing to armed groups' ongoing violence in Nigeria**

Numerous variables, such as unemployment, poverty, corruption, and poor governance, have been connected to the predominance of armed players in Nigeria (Abdulrasheed, 2021). The proportion of young people not enrolled in school, working, or receiving training has been increasing (Aina, 2024). There is a connection between Nigeria's high unemployment rate and criminal activity. Because people cannot purchase necessities, high unemployment is frequently linked to increased crime rates (Ojo et al, 2021). Nigeria produces thousands of graduates each year from postsecondary institutions who wander the streets looking for employment that doesn't exist. Many of them turn to crimes like armed robbery and theft as a method of surviving because they are frustrated by their growing financial obligations

(Madubuile & Dimnajiigo, 2013).

Mass poverty in the nation is a direct result of a high unemployment rate. Nigeria has surpassed India to claim the inconspicuous title of the world's poverty capital (Adebayo, 2018). The government's policies of eliminating fuel subsidies, devaluing currency, and allowing bandits to destroy farms have increased poverty, increased inflation, and jeopardized food security. Crime and other social vices flourish in the nation due to unemployment and poverty (Ibrahim & Dauda, 2024). As evidenced by the recent statewide #EndBadGovernance protests from August 1–10, Nigeria is now a weak state that cannot command the loyalty of its population due to official corruption, poor governance, and the incapacity and insensitivity of political leaders (Equere, 2024). Violent non-state organizations fill the void left by poor governance and frail state institutions (Falola, 2024).

In certain regions of the nation, violence has been fueled by resource access. Militant organizations were formed as a result of locals' agitation against environmental damage and their desire to profit from the Niger Delta's enormous oil deposits (Albert et al, 2020). One of the first instances of violent conflict between the populace and the government was the Niger Delta militancy (Tanko, 2021). Numerous organizations and individuals in the Niger Delta have demonstrated against the devastation of their environment and means of subsistence by oil firms operating in the region during the time of Nigeria's notorious military regimes (Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2017). After military control was replaced by civilian administration in 1999, militant groups took the lead in the agitations.

Nigeria is home to millions of small arms and light weapons that are in use throughout West Africa (Alimba, 2017). Such unlawful gun ownership has sparked many forms of criminal activity, violent confrontations, kidnapping, militancy, and terrorist attacks (Aja, 2024). Many variables have been identified as contributing to the proliferation of illegal firearms throughout Nigeria, which is mostly to blame for the high rate of violence and instability. The significant influx of small arms and light weapons is explained by the porous nature of Nigeria's border. Weapons are brought into the nation unchecked by smugglers, traffickers, and other criminal elements (Aja, 2024). These weapons are frequently brought into the nation from neighboring countries by the people tasked with border patrol and control.

One of the biggest issues facing the security services is corruption (Odeniyi, 2024). Nuhu Ribadu, the country's national security adviser, revealed in October 2024 that a significant portion of the illegal weapons being used for criminal activities in the nation were government property, and that security personnel had given them to terrorists and other non-state actors (Isamotu, 2024). With more than 40 mobile police officers and soldiers jailed nationwide in recent months, the startling trend has reached a breaking point in Nigeria (Sunday, 2024). The Nigerian government has had little success in controlling the illegal small weapons trade and other border-related crimes along its borders, as well as ensuring adequate border security. Locally made firearms have overrun Nigeria's illicit market and made the proliferation issue worse.

### **Non-state armed organizations and Nigerian human security**

Traditional security analysis, which focuses on state or national security, is being replaced by human security (Sajo, 2018). The government has the authority to protect and defend the country, its citizens, its economy, and its institutions, which is the emphasis of national security (King & Murray, 2001-2002). The safety and well-being of individuals everywhere, however, are the main concerns of human security. It centers on communal security, economic security, and personal security and touches on human rights (UNDP). It also places a strong emphasis on safety, human dignity, and freedom from want—all of which can prevent conflict, violence, riots, and crises. Protecting people from numerous hazards is the goal, and individuals are the main focus. The 1990s saw a rise in interest in human security as a topic of study and policy. In its 1994 Human Development Report, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) introduced the concept of human security (UNDP, 1994). Economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security are the seven areas of human security that the report identified. The empowerment and defense of citizens against various types of violence or the prospect of violence are components of human security.

Armed organizations' violent actions have threatened national stability and the rule of law in Nigeria, undermining all facets of human security (Okoli, 2019). Armed groups have launched coordinated attacks against critical public infrastructure, including police stations, military installations, detention centers, and the electrical industry, resulting in the loss of life, property, and other security facilities (Tanko, 2021). In the country's north, power installations have been attacked and vandalized, resulting in continuous blackouts. The Shiroro-Kaduna 330kV lines 1 and 2 were among the targets of attacks and vandalism, which caused darkness throughout the majority of northern Nigeria. Power transformers were destroyed during an armed bandit raid on the Obajana transmission station in November 2024 (Aina, 2024).

The ability of individuals or communities to regularly get essential necessities that improve their well-being, satisfaction, and dignity is what is meant by economic security. Food, shelter, clothes, personal cleanliness, medical attention, education, and social protection are among the necessities. Prices, output, employment, trade balance, poverty, inequality, and the socioeconomic environment could all be negatively impacted by its scarcity, which could drive individuals and communities into poverty, indignity, worthlessness, and instability. A stable source of income and other resources that give individuals a way to live both now and in the future are assured by economic security. Armed groups have threatened company operations and weakened Nigeria's economic security by discouraging potential investors from doing business in conflict-prone areas (Ibrahim & Dauda, 2024). Additionally, this has deterred both domestic and foreign investment and caused commercial operations to stagnate. According to Onime (2018), persistent insecurity has had serious and far-reaching effects, including causing a generalized feeling of anxiety, interfering with investments, and even halting economic operations.

In Nigeria, there is a major threat to food security, which is defined as the availability of enough nutritious food and the ability of everyone to always obtain it at a reasonable price. As a result of insecurity, people are unable to obtain enough food to meet their nutritional needs, which is considered a fundamental human right. This undermines the four pillars of food security: availability, accessibility, usage, and stability. Since agriculture is the main industry in the northern region, the presence of bandits and rebels has caused disruptions to agricultural activities because farmers are frequently frightened to work their crops for fear of being attacked. Farmlands have also been abandoned as a result of the more than two million individuals who have been displaced (Onime, 2018). Armed men and robbers have slain farmers and forced them off their fields in numerous states. Before they can enter their farms, farmers in a number of northern regions must pay taxes to bandits (Isenyo, 2024). As was recently the case in Kaduna, where local farmers bemoaned their losses and harvested maize burned on their farms, robbers occasionally destroy farmlands and set crops on fire (Isenyo, 2024).

Personal security includes safeguarding oneself and one's belongings from danger or theft, as well as ensuring one's integrity, health, and enjoyment of life. It places a strong emphasis on defending the person and his belongings against any dangers. Additionally, people are shielded from destructive behaviors, interpersonal violence, physical violence, and state abuse or threats of abuse. Armed gangs have been raging in many communities around Nigeria, killing, maiming, and kidnapping people while forcing others to flee their homes, leaving behind businesses and means of subsistence. As a result, people's security has been continuously threatened.

Ransom kidnapping has become a widespread issue and one of Nigeria's most significant security threats. In Nigeria, it is a hugely profitable business that entails the forcible and illegal kidnapping and detention of an individual against his will in order to obtain ransom. Kidnapping for ransom is "the most pervasive and intractable violent crime in the country" and a threat to national security, with hundreds of individuals being kidnapped nationwide every day (Okoli, 2019, allAfrica, 2019; Abdulkabir, 2017). Every day, a significant number of people are kidnapped from homes, schools, places of worship, marketplaces, driveways, and public roads all around the nation. Rich Nigerians, politicians, government officials, physicians, educators, entertainers, and businesspeople are among the victims. Others include schoolchildren, clergy, traditional leaders, foreign workers, and workers for large corporations. Insurgents, bandits, terrorists, armed herders, organized gangs, and private citizens are among the offenders. Nigeria is ranked first in Africa for abduction by consulting firm Control Risks, which has gained recognition as one of the top nations for kidnappings for ransom (Daily Trust,

2020; Okoli, 2019). Nigeria led the world in kidnapping for ransom cases in 2021, with 2,371 cases reported in the first half of the year. In addition to the psychological, physical, and hysterical effects on victims, it has had a negative effect on the economy.

Local markets, small enterprises, and family incomes have all suffered as a result of the economic relocation of people and communities. In northern Nigeria, banditry has caused cattle and other livestock to be rustled, causing financial losses for herders and upsetting the supply chain for meat and dairy products (Tanko, 2021). The economy of the southeast has been seriously disrupted by the Monday sit-at-home that separatists demand and that "unknown gunmen" enforce. Oil theft and pipeline vandalism are nearly destroying the oil business in the south-south region. In terms of armed robbery and kidnapping, the Southwest leads the nation. Because of frequent attacks, it is unsafe to travel on the majority of Nigerian roadways. In Ogun State, bandits ambushed a luxury bus, stole from the passengers, and burned it on fire (Ogunnaike, 2024). In a different incident, armed criminals stopped a bus headed for Abakaliki in the southeast, stole from every person inside, and then burned the bus on fire.

Children's rights to an education have been violated by attacks on schools, endangering Nigeria's very future (Prasad & Gupta, 2020). In a number of northern Nigerian areas, armed groups have begun targeting schools and kidnapping students for ransom (Ojewale, 2024). More than 19,000 teachers were displaced, more than 1,500 schools were closed for security reasons, 2,295 teachers were killed in attacks, and almost 1,500 schools were damaged between 2009 and 2022. Approximately one million children now have limited or no access to education as a result of this. With the majority living in the north, Nigeria has the highest number of out-of-school children in the world at 20.2 million. Millions of kids require immediate assistance with their education (UNESCO, 2022).

### **Nigeria at a turning point**

The prevalence of insecurity seems to be increasing and quickly turning into an existential problem, despite government efforts to combat terrorism and significant budgetary expenditures on security. Every day, people are slain and economic growth is suppressed. In addition to forcing both foreigners and citizens to leave the country, it has increased unemployment, starvation, and poverty. Foreign direct investments have a detrimental effect on the business environment and small and medium-sized businesses. All facets of society have been affected by insecurity, which has also rocked Nigeria's nationhood to its core.

Nigerian security services frequently assert that they have killed thousands of militants. According to a military spokesperson in September 2024, troops killed 1,937 terrorists, detained 2,782 suspected terrorists and other criminal elements, and freed 1,854 hostages nationwide during the third quarter of 2024 (Adetayo, 2024). However, because terrorists still operate freely and oppose government authority, these accusations are frequently unverifiable. The threat presented by criminal gangs and armed groups has increased due to their increased coordination (Center for Preventive Action, 2024). Arrested individuals ought to stand trial for their offenses. In order to hold them accountable for war crimes and crimes against humanity, the government should bring them before national or hybrid courts or refer them to the International Criminal Court (Archibong & Lloyd, 2021).

The Nigerian government can enter into a deal with militant groups as it was done in the Niger Delta to promote voluntary return of arms in exchange for amnesty. Corruption in the security services has seriously undermined Nigeria's fight against insecurity and must be addressed (Ogide, 2024). Corrupt security officers, and regulatory agents have contributed significantly to the proliferation of small arms. Arms smugglers bribe border officials who allow them to bring in their illicit goods. The government should get rid of all illegal arms from circulation. Stringent rules should be made to guide the production of local guns and those involved in the production exercise should be made to register for the sake of monitoring and control of the business.

It is important to fix the governance problem plaguing Nigeria as it is a prominent aider of the proliferation of armed groups. Other secondary challenges can only be fixed when there exists a disciplined functional government in Nigeria. The government should provide a safe and secure environment for businesses and human capital development, as well as improved access to social and

economic services and education. This will reduce poverty, create jobs, and curb violent tendencies among the teeming youth population. In addition to using force, the government should address socio-economic factors that contribute to terrorism, banditry, and other violent crimes in the nation, such as bad governance, corruption, and high unemployment.

### Conclusion

Undoubtedly, a number of economic, social, political, and security-related factors, primarily unemployment, poverty, and the availability of small arms, have allowed non-state armed actors to encircle Nigeria. With the recent wave of kidnappings and the government's helplessness, Nigeria is at a crossroads and faces a monster that could devour it at any time. To escape it, it is necessary to implement intentional and coordinated policies to combat unemployment, end official corruption, and alleviate poverty. It should also establish a responsible and motivated security apparatus to handle the numerous crimes, as well as harsh penalties to act as a deterrence.

### References

- Abdulrasheed, A. (2021). Armed Banditry and Human Security in North Western Nigeria: The and the Way forward. *Journal of Humanities and Social and Management Sciences Edwin Clark University*, 1(1).
- Adebayo, B. (2018). Nigeria overtakes India in extreme poverty ranking. *CNN*, June 26, 2018. <http://cnn.com/2018/06/26/Africa/Nigeria-overtakes-india-extreme-poverty-intl/index.html> accessed 21/10/2024
- Adetayo, O. (2024). Nigeria military says dozens of militia group leaders killed over past three months. *CNBC Africa*, 26 Sep <https://www.cnbc.com> accessed 10/11/2024
- Adeniran, Y. (2024). Legal fireworks as Yoruba nation agitators challenge jurisdiction of court. *The Nation* November 14 2024.
- Aina, T. (2024). Nigeria's unemployment rate rose to 5.3% in Q1 – Report. PUNCH 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024.
- Aina, D. (2024). Armed men attack Obajana transmission station, destroy power transformers. PUNCH 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024.
- Aja, U. A. (2024). Merchants of terror: Proliferation of small arms and light weapons and human security challenges in Nigeria. *African Security Review*, 1, 49-63.
- Albert, I.O., Danjibo, N. & Albert, O. (2020). Back to the Past: Evolution of Kidnapping and Hostage Taking in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. *BLR Vol. 11 No. 1*
- Alimba, C. N. (2017). Controlling the Proliferation of Small Arms in Nigeria: Emerging Issues and Challenges. *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5(10), 40-51.
- Aljazeera, (2021). 'Bandits' shoot down Nigeria fighter jet; pilot survives. 19 July.
- allAfrica (2019). Nigeria: What Nigeria Must Do to Deal With Its Ransom-Driven Kidnapping Crisis. 20 May [allafrica.com/stories/2019/05210003.html](http://allafrica.com/stories/2019/05210003.html) accessed 21/7/2024
- Anyadike, O. (2023). 'Everyone knows somebody who has been kidnapping': Inside Nigeria banditry epidemic. *THE NEW HUMANITARIAN* 30 January.
- Archibong, J. E. and Lloyd, C. J. (2021). Long road to justice: Omar al-bashir and the issue of heinous crimes in Darfur. *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*, 25(2). March.
- Austine, E. and Sunday, E. C. (2013). Niger Deltan: A Critical Appraisal of the Amnesty Programme and Social Political Development in Nigeria. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 22, 130-137.
- Bala, U. A., Ahmed, A. T., & Gyong, Y. E. (2023). Effects of Rural Banditry on Human Security: Implications on Stability of Kontagora Local Government from 2015-2022. *Lapai International Journal Administration*, 5(2), 434-448.



- Billebault, A. (2023). Nigeria: Tracing the rise of cult groups to an ‘African Mafia’. *The Africa Report* May 24.
- Buba, Imrana (2023). Bandits in Nigeria: how protection payments to militias escalate conflict in the north-west. *THE CONVERSATION* August 15.
- Campbell, J., & Quinn, N. (2021). What’s behind Growing Separatism in Nigeria?. *Council on Foreign Relations* August 3.
- Center for Preventive Action (2024). Violent Extremism in the Sahel. *Council of Foreign Relations* 23 Oct.
- Daniel, O. B. (2023). Farmers-Herders Conflicts in Nigeria: A Role for FBOs?. *Wilson Centre* May 26.
- Equere, F. (2024). End bad protest show anger and hunger for Nigeria. *BBC News* 11 August at [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com) accessed 21/10/2024
- Falola, T. (2024). Young Nigerians’ push for change must go beyond street protests – historian. *THE CONVERSATION* August 8
- Foyou, V. E., Ngwafu, P., Santoyo, M., & Ortiz, A. “The Boko Haram Insurgency and its Impact on Border Security, Trade and Economic Collaboration Between Nigeria and Cameroon: An Exploratory Study. *African Social Science Review*, 9(1), Article 7.
- Ibrahim, B., & Muktar, J. I. (2017). An Analysis of the Causes and Consequences of Kidnapping in Nigeria. *African Research Review*, 11(4).
- Ibrahim, L. O., & Dauda, A. (2024). Insecurity and its implications on Economic Development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, 8(7), 1563-1570.
- Isamotu, I. (2024). Security Agents Supplying Arms To Terrorists, Bandits – NSA. *Daily Trust* 18 Oct.
- Isenyo, G. (2024). Outrage as bandits burn harvested maize on Kaduna farms. *PUNCH* 13<sup>th</sup> November.
- King, G., & Murray, C.J.L. (2001-2002). Rethinking Human Security. *Political Science Quarterly*, 116(4), 585-610.
- Madubuile, G. O., & Dimnnajiego, K. E. (2013). Crime and Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: The Psycho-Social Implications. *International Journal for Psychotherapy in Africa*, 8(1), 147-158
- Odeniyi, S. (2024). Ribadu berates policemen, soldiers selling arms to criminals. *PUNCH* 17<sup>th</sup> October.
- Ogide, V. (2024). The insecurity within: Are Nigerian Security Agencies failing on their mandates?. *Centre for Democracy and development* 9 Aug [www.cddwestafrica.org](http://www.cddwestafrica.org) accessed 10/10/2024
- Ogunnaike, J. (2024). Bandits attack luxury bus, rob passengers, set bus ablaze in Ogun. *Vanguard* April 2.
- Ojewale, O. (2024). Nigeria bandits strategically target school children for kidnapping – here’s why. *THE CONVERSATION* March 26.
- Ojo, Y. J., Omojuwa, O. & Oludare, K. M. (2021). Unemployment and Crime Rate Nexus: An Empirical Evidence from Nigeria. *Journal of Economics and Policy*, 6(2), 46-66.
- Ojo, J. S., & Olumba, E. E. (2024). Nigeria’s terror group Lakurawa is nothing new – it exists because of government’s failure: analysts. *The Conversation* November 17.
- Okoli, C.A. (2019). Kidnapping for ransom has become Nigeria’s latest security problem. *QUARTZ AFRICA* 2019 available at [Quartz>Africa>1624376](https://www.quartz.com/africa/2019/10/21/1624376) accessed 21/10/2024
- Onime, B. E. (2018). Insecurity and Economic Growth in Nigeria: A Diagnostic Review. *European Scientific Journal*, 14(4), 377-391.
- Oyibo, H. (2020). Nigeria’s campus cults: Buccaneers, Black Axe and other feared groups. *BBC Pidgin* 2 June [ww.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com) accessed 22/9/2024

- Prado, J. L. G. (2011). A United Nations instrument to regulate and monitor private military and security contractors *Notre Dame Journal of International, Comparative, & Human Rights Law*.
- Prasad, C., & Gupta, P. (2020). Educational Impact of the Society. *International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning*, 7(6), 1-7.
- Salman, A., Uthman, I., & Odeniyi, S. (2024). How Lukarawa terrorists operate in 10 Sokoto, Bauchi council areas. *PUNCH* 17<sup>th</sup> November 2024.
- Steffen, D. Who are the Niger Delta Avengers? Center for International Maritime Security June 14 [https://cimsec.org > niger-delta-avengers](https://cimsec.org/niger-delta-avengers) accessed 21/11/2024
- Soetan, S.O. (2017). Proliferation of arms and security challenges in Nigeria. *Journal of History and Cultural Studies*, 3(3), 33-38.
- Sunday, O. (2024). 40 Nigerian security personnel arrested for allegedly arming terrorists – Experts. *The Guardian* 15 November.
- Tanko, A. (2021). Nigeria's security crises – five different threats. BBC News [https://www.bbc.com > news](https://www.bbc.com/news) accessed 11/11/2024
- UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) 1994. Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security. New York.
- UNESCO (2022). Out-of-school number are growing in sub-Saharan Africa – UNESCO [www.unesco.org > gem-report](http://www.unesco.org/gem-report) accessed 23/11/2024
- Vanguard. (2022). Are armed non-state actors taking control?. July 29.