

INSIGHTS FROM NEXTIER'S NIGERIA VIOLENT CONFLICTS DATABASE

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DISCLAIMER:

Data from Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database is culled from reported violent conflict incidents from major national dailies and primary sources.

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Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
APC	All Progressives Congress
CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria
CJTF	Civilian Joint Task Force
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth Development Office
FMCG	Fast Moving Consumer Goods
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IGP	Inspector General of Police
IMB	International Maritime Bureau
IPOB	Indigenous People of Biafra
IS SAHEL	Islamic State Sahel Province
ISWAP	Islamic State's West African Province
JNIM	Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal-Muslimin
LGA	Local Government Area
MNCs	Multinational Companies
NGN	Naira
PMS	Premium Motor Spirit
QRW	Quick Response Wing
SEC	Securities and Exchange Commission
SPD	Security Peace and Development
SPRING	Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria
SSI	Safe School Initiative
SSTF	State Security Trust Fund
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
USD	United States Dollar
NNVCD	Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

Executive Summary

Between June 2020 and 2024, Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database (NNVCD) reported a total of 20,472 casualties arising from 5,291 violent incidents in Nigeria. We undertake a qualitative analysis of trends in violent conflict using the Nextier Violent Conflicts Database and supplements from other sources to present major developments in the past five years. We use these data as insight for projecting Nigeria's security outlook for 2025.

Key Violent Conflicts and Events in Nigeria in 2024

Terrorism has remained a key component of security conversation in Nigeria since the escalation of Boko Haram conflicts. Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database showed that between January and December 2024, Nigeria recorded 43 incidents of terrorism with a total of 278 casualties. There were 1306 incidents of banditry with 253 casualties within the same period. Illicit mining persisted in the North West and contributed to arming the bandits and making the region ungovernable and conducive to illicit mining.

Secessionism remained a major form of violent conflict in Nigeria. From January to December 2024, the Nextier Violent Conflicts Database recorded 35 incidents related to secession, with 87 casualties. The lack of consensus among the different factions of the secessionist groups on the approaches for the secessionist agitation has contributed to violent secessionist agitation in the Southeast.

In the area of maritime security, the efforts of the private and state security agencies have seen a marginal rise of between 1.5 and 1.8 million barrels a day, and if all security situations remain the same, a projection of 2 million barrels a day may be realisable.

Kidnapping across Nigeria manifested in various forms with kidnapping for ransom (K4R) being the most pronounced. A total of 11,002 persons were kidnapped in Nigeria between June 2020 and December 2024. Regional analysis of the Nextier Violent Conflicts Database on kidnapping across the country showed that the North West was the most impacted region.

Farmer-herder conflict was a major source of insecurity in Nigeria, particularly in the North Central and North West regions where it was

more pronounced. At least 2,347 casualties were recorded in 359 violent incidents involving farmers and herders across Nigeria between 2020 and 2024. In the year 2024 alone, Nigeria recorded a total of 467 casualties in 61 violent incidents involving farmers and herders. The North Central topped the chart with 416 or 89.1% of the total casualties and 42 or 68.9% of the violent incidents involving farmers and herders.

Politically related conflicts identified in the report include ethnic conflict connected to the post-2023 elections. In 2024, there was evidence of ethnic tensions between the Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups. The tensions were most pronounced in Lagos State and were connected to the outcome of the 2023 elections. In Rivers State, the conflict between the state governor, Siminalayi Fubara, and his now estranged political godfather, Nyesom Wike, over the control of Rivers State has raised tension in the state.

Other violent incidents identified in the report are cultism, communal clashes, gunmen attacks, extra-judicial killings and violent protests. Between June 2020 and December 2024, a total of 2988 incidents of cult clashes resulting in 695 casualties were recorded across Nigeria. Incidents of cult clashes and related casualties rose continuously from 2020 and peaked in 2022, reaching 224 casualties in 92 cult clash incidents. However, both incidents and casualties declined steadily from 2023 to 2024.

Data on gunmen attacks for the period showed that between June 2020 and December 2024, Nigeria recorded a total of 1,388 incidents of gunmen attacks, resulting in 2376 casualties across the country. In 2024, the North Central was the most affected region, accounting for 116 incidents and 307 casualties of gunmen attacks across the country. A total of 80 communal clashes resulting in 371 deaths were recorded across the country between June 2020 and December 2024. North Central had the highest number of incidents and casualties of communal clashes. Between June 2020 and December 2024, a total of 609 casualties were recorded in 201 incidents of extra-judicial killings across Nigeria. Protests continued to turn violent in Nigeria due to factors such as the infiltration of protesters by thugs and criminals and the use of excessive force by security personnel. At least 24 protesters were killed during the August 2024 #EndBadGovernance protest in Nigeria¹.

¹ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. (2024). Nigeria: Populations at Risk. R2P Monitor, Issue 71(1), <https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/nigeria/>

Nigeria's Security Outlook for 2025

Terrorism and banditry in 2025 will be defined by various factors, particularly the expansion of the new terrorist groups (Lakurawa) in Nigeria.

In 2025, the trend of secessionism will be determined by how the Nigerian government handles Mazi Nnamdi Kanu's continued incarceration and its engagement with the Finnish government over the extradition of Simon Ekpa.

Kidnapping in 2025 will be determined by factors such as adequate utilisation of increased budgetary allocation to defence and security, invigoration of local vigilantes by state governments, and an increase in the volume of cash in circulation.

Farmer-herder conflict will be determined by factors such as the capacity of the newly established Ministry of Livestock Development and the Presidential Committee on Livestock Reforms to drive reforms.

Four key factors will determine the trend of political conflicts in 2025. First, there are ongoing ethnic tensions between the Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups. Second, there is the ongoing godfather conflict in Rivers State. Third, there is information dislocation and hate speech. Fourth, there are the permutations for the 2027 general elections and a number of off-cycle elections across the country.

The report identified five external factors that will shape Nigeria's security in 2025: the war in Sudan, the expansion of terrorist groups across Sahel states, Nigeria's closer relations with France amidst rejection by Sahel countries, electoral outcomes in Nigeria's neighbouring countries, and Russia's increasing influence in Africa. The major economic events that will shape Nigeria's security outlook in 2025 include sustained increases in the prices of commodities following the removal of the fuel subsidy.

Key Recommendations

For terrorism

- Continue with kinetic and non-kinetic approaches by better equipping the military and providing improved working incentives, both in remuneration and working conditions.
- Ensure that improved defence and security spendings reflect on the security sector outcomes. The defence budget should be subject to audit.
- Invest more in the use of intelligence and take steps to curtail intelligence failures that lead to collateral damages.

- Apply intelligence to follow terrorist organisations' patterns of mutation in order to continue offensives that would finally suppress them. In the same vein, security institutions must monitor and destroy the expansion of the Lakurawa terrorist organisation. This requires penetrating the local base of their operations to obtain the necessary information.
- Newer recruitment into the armed services should take into account the need to extend the presence of the state in un(der)governed territories and prevent the easy planting and nurturing of alternative centres of power, especially ones with extreme ideologies and or terrorist interests.
- Lakurawa terrorist group was imported by a local community to protect them against bandits from Zamfara State because there was no state presence in the area. The government should focus on enhancing its penetrative and regulative capacity in all parts of its territorial space.

For Banditry and illicit mining

- In addition to all the recommendations for terrorism, we also recommend that for banditry, the government should take more than a passing interest in solid mineral mining. The proposed budget for the sector in 2025 is NGN 9 billion.² This amount lacks the capacity to meet the level of investment required to stimulate the sector's high potential as a major source of state revenue. So, the government should prioritise the sector in budgeting.
- Security protection is also largely absent in the sector. Bandits build on this inadequacy to overrun the mining locations and set up their own regime of extraction because the state is largely absent.
- The Federal Government should diligently follow through with its agreement with the United Arab Emirates regarding the requirement of a certificate for the sale of Nigerian gold in their country. In addition, the government should explore other trading outlets for Nigerian gold and set up the same kind of regulatory restriction to limit the rewards of illicit gold mining from Nigeria. The same approach should be used to control other solid minerals that attract a lot of interest and crime.
- For secession, the Federal Government has done well to set up the South East Development Commission. It should ensure that the commission is funded for the development of the region. Strategic communication should be part of development projects done by the

Commission to convince the people of the region that the government is equitable and inclusive in its value allocation across the geopolitical zones. Besides, more investments that convince the people that the government has not abandoned them should be undertaken so that the perception of marginalisation is played.

- The government should seriously consider releasing Nnamdi Kanu in order to separate those who agitate for Biafra from bandits. This will help to focus more squarely on degrading banditry, kidnapping and other gun crimes in the region.
- By declaring the focus of security in the South East as the elimination of banditry, kidnapping, cultism and gun crimes, it would elicit more cooperation.

For piracy and crude oil theft

- Government should maintain its current maritime security governance practices, especially the international cooperation that has supported the impressive progress it has made over the past few years to reduce maritime piracy in Nigeria.
- The powerful patrons of piracy and persons in political authorities that provide business for and offer protection to pirates should be tracked, prosecuted and jailed.
- In addition to the use of pipeline security companies, more sophisticated technologies of pipeline security should be explored and deployed.
- State-of-the-art oil metering system that starts right from the flow station to be deployed. Besides security cameras should be mounted and watched from a distant console to reinforce direct security forces guarding the pipelines.
- The government should invest in strategic communications about economic sabotage and the environmental and health dangers of illicit refining of oil.
- Severe sanctions to be legislated against security forces that aid and abet oil theft and illicit refining.

Above all, the government should start addressing the conditions that prompt young people, community leaders and underpaid public servants, including soldiers, police officers and a range of other actors, to engage in oil theft and illicit refining.

For piracy and kidnapping in Nigeria

- The federal government should sustain the kinetic approach of deploying security personnel to patrol flashpoints notorious for kidnapping, especially border communities connecting different states. This includes the 'belts of kidnapping' identified in the North West by Nextier in this study.
- Security agencies should prioritise intelligence gathering by working with local communities to identify kidnap suspects and dens from where they operate. The security agencies should support and work with families of kidnap victims while the victims are in captivity and at the time of negotiation in order to gather intelligence. Rescued kidnap victims should be debriefed to obtain relevant information about the strategies of kidnappers.
- Security should be beefed up in vulnerable schools, particularly boarding schools in remote areas. This could be done by ensuring proper fencing and maintaining adequate security presence around the school premises.
- The federal community should adopt an early warning and early response mechanism which should involve the integration of state-of-the-art technologies, including drones, to track and respond to kidnap incidents
- Local police architectures, such as vigilantes, should be strengthened through proper funding, equipment, personnel training and motivation. There should also be strong collaboration and information sharing between the vigilantes and federal security agencies.
- As part of long term measures for addressing kidnapping for ransom, the CBN and related regulatory agencies should emplace measures to support easy electronic transactions and reduce cash-based transaction. This will make payment of ransom difficult.

For farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria

- The Nigerian government must speed up implementation of climate change mitigation strategies aimed at curbing drought, desertification and flooding. Both farmers and herders must be empowered with climate change adaptation strategies to curb their violent competition over land and water resources.
- Government at national and sub-national levels should sustain peace dialogues between

farmers and herders for easy resolution of conflicts such as trespass and cattle rustling.

- Indiscriminate land sales/allocation by unauthorised persons who extort herders and allocate lands to them for grazing should be punished in accordance with the law.
- The federal government through the newly created Ministry of livestock should devise and support more modern ways of animal production that reduces the current practice of moving cattle over long distance by herders for the purposes of grazing.

For politically motivated conflicts in Nigeria

- The government must demonstrate the political will to identify and punish persons promoting hate speech and fake news, particularly those that aim to politically undermine certain ethnic, religious or political groups.

For other sources of violent incidents in Nigeria

Cultism

- Government at all levels should ensure that revenue like rates/levies in the markets are collected by state revenue collection agencies. This will ensure that cult groups do not convert markets and parks to their fund raising territories.

Gunmen attacks

- Government should deepen measures to combat the spread of small arms and light weapons across the country.

Communal clashes

- Government should ensure effective border demarcation among communities with conflicting borders.
- Government should promote dialogue among communities involved in dispute over land and other resources in order to avert resort to violence.

Extrajudicial killings

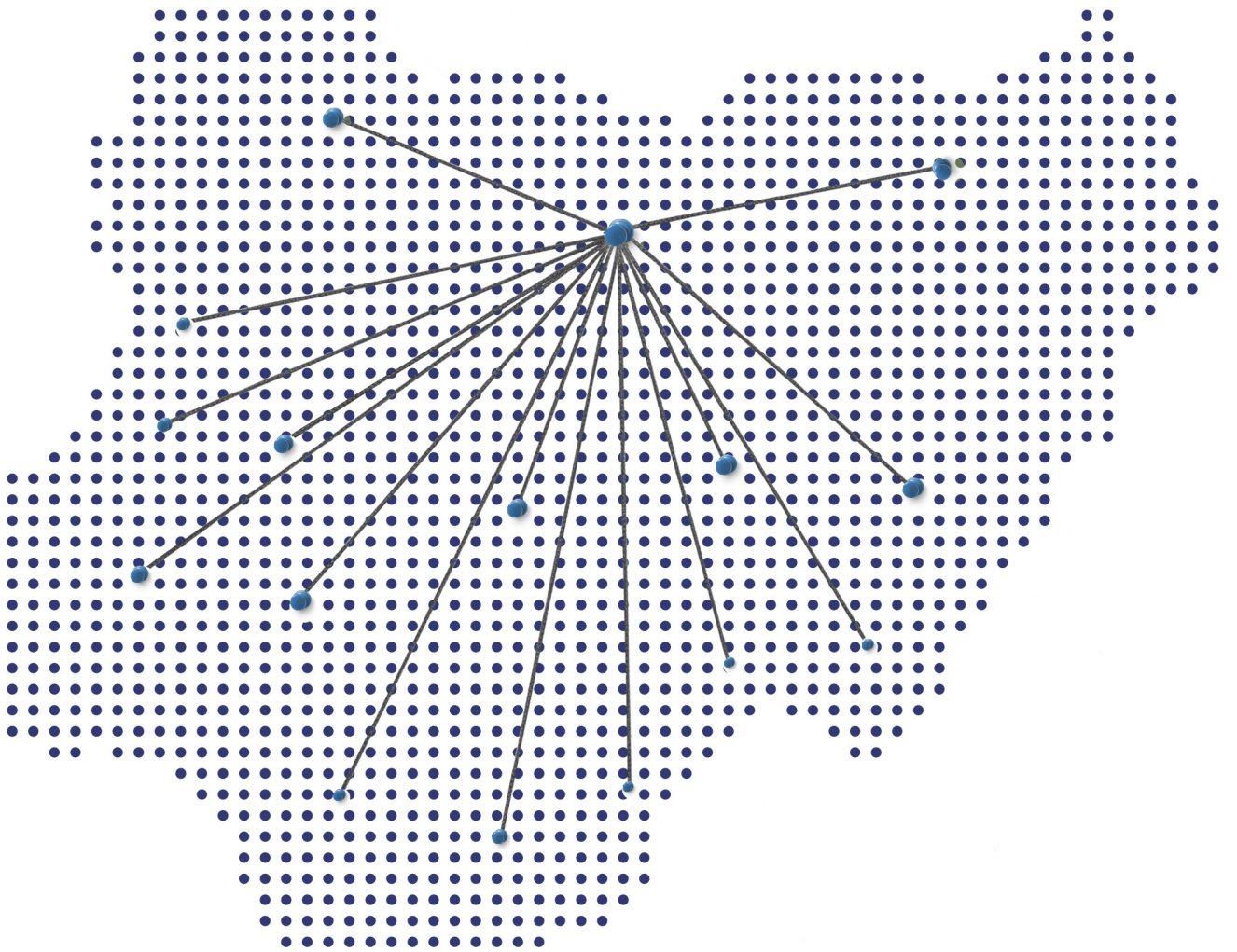
- Government should sustain regular training of personnel of security agencies on how to discharge their duties without abusing human rights. Allegations of extra judicial killings by security personnel should be thoroughly investigated and offenders prosecuted accordingly.
- There is need to deepen the fight against corruption in the judiciary in order to enhance the confidence of the masses to settle disputes in the judiciary instead of resorting to self-help.

Violent protests

- Government should deepen social security measures aimed at ameliorating the effects of neoliberal reforms such as subsidy removal on the masses.
- The national assembly must carry out wide consultation and ensure that genuine interest of all stakeholders across the country are reflected in the tax bill before it is passed in the law.



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Introduction

The Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database has been documenting major violent conflicts in Nigeria since June 2020 and covers incidents of terrorism, banditry, farmer-herder conflict, kidnapping, group violence, extra-judicial killings, communal clashes, cult clashes, secessionism and armed robbery. These incidents collectively bear on national security and stand out in national security thinking, policy-making and public expenditure. Most importantly, the dynamics that drive these areas of insecurity, policy responses and societal attitudes offer us the basis for looking into the future. In this regard, Nextier SPD stands on available data and practices to introspect into Nigeria's security environment of 2025 by considering possibilities based on events of the previous few years.

Emerging security issues tend towards overstretching state capacity and move the country to the edge of possible chaos. Terrorism, for instance, which is driven largely by Boko Haram and later, the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) and occurs mostly in the northern parts of the country, has overstretched Nigerian security institutions with severe impacts on societal cohesion, political stability and national economy. The Global Terrorism Index, which ranks countries most impacted by terrorism consistently in its annual ranking between 2015 and 2020, placed Nigeria number 3 in terms of terrorism most impacted countries. This dismal position witnessed a minor shift to the 6th position in 2022 and then the 8th position in 2023 and 2024. The marginal progress made so far warrants a need for further engagements. Over the same period, 2020 to 2024, the NNVCD reported a total of 20,472 casualties arising from 5,291 violent incidents in Nigeria.

The complexity of insecurity in Nigeria is such that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish terrorism, banditry and farmer-herder violence or between secessionism and banditry due to the pervasive use of vicious violence in the various classes of insecurity. Indeed, armed terrorist groups like Boko Haram have recently begun to link with bandits to consolidate their position.¹ Another nuanced development in terrorism is that those who were hitherto known as peaceful herders in the northwestern state of Sokoto in the border region of Nigeria and Niger Republic have transformed into a terrorist organisation.² In the case of clear farmer-herder violence, the crisis continues across the country, rising and falling intermittently with open ventilation of grievances by the affected parties and indications of continuing crises due to

unresolved livelihood issues.

Kidnapping, which is spread across the country, is a major national challenge and cuts across the activities of terrorists, bandits and other criminal groups. Both urban and rural locations and national highways have become troubled spots as kidnapers raid for human beings as commodities, which they exchange for ransom that runs into several millions. In spite of state interventions, the National Bureau of Statistics reported in December 2024 that during the year, Nigerians paid 2.3 trillion Naira in ransom to kidnapers.³ This amount substantially surpasses the annual budget for defence and security in 2024 and could not have captured the dark figures or unreported ransom payments in the burgeoning business of kidnapping for ransom.

Secessionist demands also threaten the fragile peace of the country. Mostly, secessionist agitation is more common with the Biafran state agitation in the southeastern part but has recently spread to the South West with the rise of a group agitating for an Oduduwa state. The secessionist agitations bear concern to the federal government because containing the Biafran agitation puts pressure on Nigerian troops and resources due to its extensive appeal to a large group of people and their greater likelihood of attracting support.

Other frontiers of insecurity that we give attention to are piracy, oil theft and illegal refining in the Niger Delta, which spiralled since the 2020s and appear to be sustained since the removal of oil subsidy in 2023. Crude oil theft drastically affects Nigeria's daily oil production output. This is an important security concern because it directly affects the main source of national revenue. Other emerging security concerns include the management of free speech and public protests like the #EndBadGovernance protest, as well as politically motivated citizenship conflicts, especially in Lagos. This conflict, while not new, has developed further dimensions and may even increase as the 2027 elections draw near because it may serve as a veritable instrument for the pursuit of electoral victory.

Nextier considered the steps taken by the government and communities to approach these varieties of insecurity, the outcomes of such steps in mitigating the incidents, and their effects on lives, properties, and peace. In this piece, Nextier presents an analysis of how these factors may condition Nigeria's security environment in 2025.

¹ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. (2024). Nigeria: Populations at Risk. R2P Monitor, Issue 71(1), <https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/nigeria/>

² Rufai, Murtala, Ahmed. (2024). Importing militant jihadists: analysing the response of traditional authorities to Muslim youth extremism in the Nigeria-Niger border areas of Sokoto State. In D. Ehrhardt, D. O. Alao and M.S. Umar (Eds). Traditional authority and security in contemporary Nigeria. 151-168. Routledge

³ Jimoh, Joy. (2024, December 18). Nigerians' 12-month ransom payment surpasses defense budget. Business day. https://businessday.ng/news/article/nigerians-12-month-ransom-payment-surpasses-defense-budget/#google_vignette



Dimensions of Violent Conflicts in Nigeria:

Analysis and Projections for 2025



Terrorism

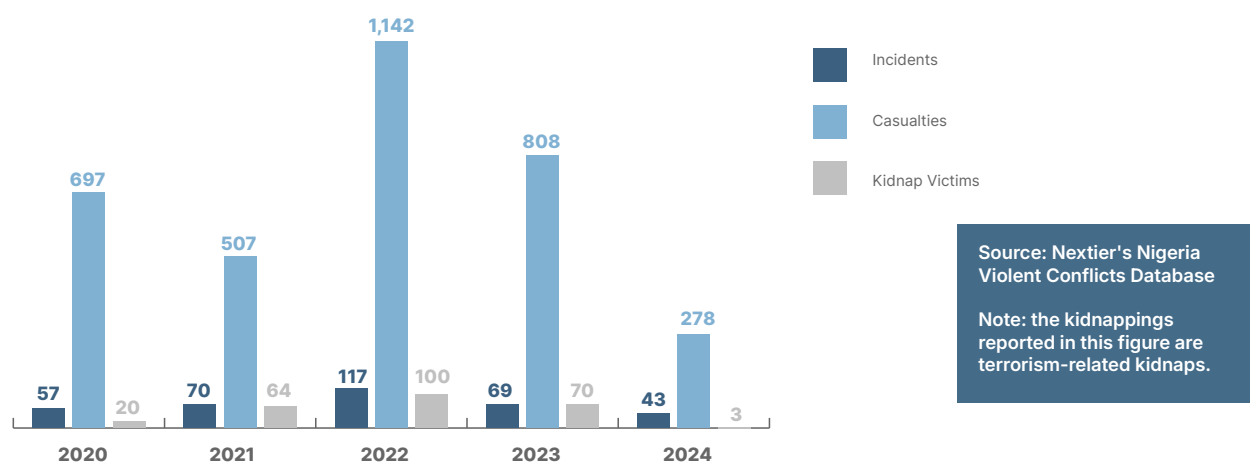
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i. General trend of terrorism

Terrorism became a central component of security conversation in Nigeria since the escalation of Boko Haram conflicts. Its emergence and rise substantially redefined the security landscape of the country. The ebb and flow of its occurrence is a major policy issue in the country. Looking at the NNVCDB over the past four years, from June to December 2020, there were 57 incidents of terrorism and 697 casualties from its attack. In 2021, the records for terrorism from January to December indicate 70 incidents and 507 casualties. In this same period, kidnapping and banditry were also significant incidents of insecurity in the country, with major occurrences in the North West

of Nigeria. While different sections were devoted to the analysis of both banditry and kidnapping as separate dimensions of insecurity, we refer to them in this section because, in some instances, they are terrorist-linked activities. Terrorism rose to 117 incidents in 2022, with a record high of 1,142 casualties. Over these periods, the incidence has been more pronounced in the country's North East. A 12-month period in 2023 witnessed 69 incidents of terrorism and 808 casualties. From January to December 2024, the incidence of terrorism declined to 43, with a total of 278 casualties (see Fig1).

Fig1 - Terrorism: Yearly Trend



ii. State response to terrorism

a. Kinetic and non-kinetic approaches

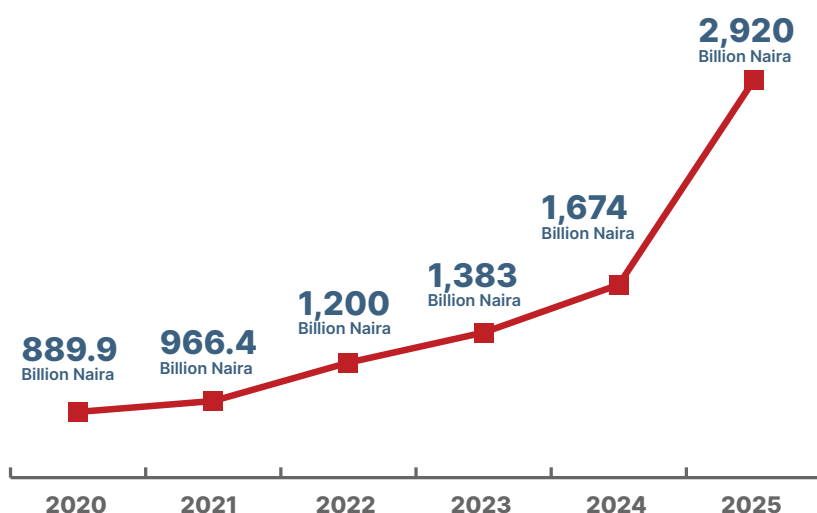
Government interventions have been both kinetic and non-kinetic. The kinetic approach includes military campaigns against terrorists in most of the North East and North West, spanning a period of over ten years. However, the terrorists appear quite determined in pursuit of their aims and have

stood defiant and more sophisticated in fighting back. Though substantially degraded, they are still very much present, as some of them appear to have blended with bandits, but they have not given up on their terror mission. The non-kinetic approach is the government provision of different forms of exit corridors for terrorists to surrender their arms for a state pardon. Operation Safe Corridor (International Crisis Group, 2021). An exit from Boko Haram? Assessing Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor⁴ is one such approach, and it has, to a large extent, led to the repentance of many Boko Haram terrorists. But terrorism remains a lived experience of Nigerians, especially in the North East and North West of the country.

b. Increased budgetary allocation to security and defence

At the core of all government interventions are budgetary allocations for security and defence. Security and defence as line items have become dominant items in budgetary expenditure as the Federal budget for security and defence in the past five years has been increasing. The sum of ₦899.9 billion was budgeted for defence in 2020. ₦966.4 billion was budgeted in 2021. It was increased to ₦1.2 trillion in 2022 and further raised

Fig 2 - Nigeria's Defense Budget: Yearly Trend (Billion Naira)



Source: Ministry of Budget.

to ₦1.383 trillion in 2023. The defence budget for 2024 is ₦1.674 trillion, which is about 5.7 % of the 2024 budget, and 2025 estimate is ₦2.920 trillion (see Fig 2). Another important component of the security budget, which is the police, had a budget of ₦455 billion in 2021. ₦559 billion was budgeted for the police in 2022, while ₦838 billion was the 2023 budget. In 2024, the Police budget stood at ₦969.6 billion.⁵ The 2025 combined budget for security and defence is ₦6.57 trillion, representing 13.20 per cent of the budget.⁶

At the subnational levels, the state governments also invest in public order and security with votes

that ought to improve public order in addition to efforts of the central governments. The point is that if these funds are judiciously utilised to empower the security sector, both terrorism and other major challenges to national security would record drastic reductions. In the last five years, some of the flashpoint states like Borno, Katsina, Niger, Zamfara, Yobe, and Kaduna states also budgeted for public law and order (see Fig. 3). These states have been under the burden of terror and banditry more than most other states of Nigeria and some of them have invested in internal mechanisms to support the fight against terrorism such as vigilantism for local community protection.

⁴ International Crisis Group. (2021). An exit from Boko Haram? Assessing Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/b170-exit-boko-haram-assessing-nigerias-operation-safe-corridor>

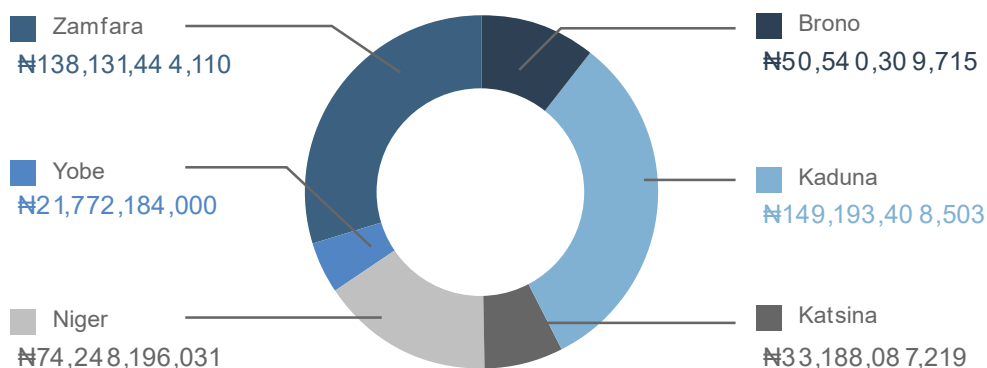
⁵ Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre. (2024). Security budget rises, yet insecurity worsens. Legist. <https://placng.org/Legist/security-budget-rises-yet-insecurity-worsens/>

⁶ Budget. (2025). 2025 FG proposed budget. <https://budget.org/infographics/>

⁷ Ekanem, Solomon. (2024, December 27). ECOWAS steps in as Niger accuses Nigeria of destabilization. Business Insider Africa. <https://africa.businessinsider.com/local/life-style/ecowas-steps-in-as-niger-accuses-nigeria-of-destabilization-regional-interference/pkqyljk>

⁸ Olugbode, Michael. (2025). Borno Government: Forty farmers killed in terror attack, seeks help from the armed forces. This Day. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2025/01/14/orno-govt-forty-farmers-killed-in-terror-attacks-seeks-help-from-the-armed-forces/>

Fig 3 - Annual Budgets of the Flashpoint States on Public Order and Safety



Source: Compiled by Nextier from budgets of Borno, Kaduna, Katsina, Niger, Yobe and Zamfara States in the past six years.

iii. Emerging situations projections for terrorism in 2025

a. Nigeria’s strained relations with Niger

The government of Niger Republic accused Nigeria in December 2024 of colluding with France to support a terrorist group in the border areas of Nigeria and Niger Republic for the purpose of destabilising Niger Republic. Their suspicion is fuelled by the rise of a new terrorist group called Lakurawa in the border regions between Sokoto state of Nigeria and Niger

Republic, as well as the sabotage of the Niger-Benin gas pipeline in Gaya on December 13, 2024.⁷ While there is no conclusive evidence for Niger’s accusation, the rise of a new terrorist group in Nigeria could potentially add new life to terrorism in the North West of Nigeria and possibly expand both within Nigeria and her immediate neighbouring countries.

b. Persistence of old and expansion of the new terrorist groups (Lakurawa) in Nigeria

The older terrorist organisations like Boko Haram and ISWAP have been significantly limited in their capacity for direct engagement with the military, yet they still occasionally unleash vicious attacks on both soft and hard targets. On January 12th 2025, suspected Boko Haram/ISWAP terrorists attacked Dumba community in Kukawa LGA of Borno state⁹ and killed forty persons. While the old ones demonstrate resilience, newer terrorist groups are emerging in the Sahelian tip of Nigeria’s northern boundary.

⁹ Rufai, Murtala, Ahmed. (2024). Importing militant jihadists: analysing the response of traditional authorities to Muslim youth extremism in the Nigeria-Niger border areas of Sokoto State. In D. Ehrhardt, D. O. Alao and M.S. Umar (Eds). Traditional authority and security in contemporary Nigeria. 151-168. Routledge.

¹⁰ Rufai, Murtala, Ahmed. (2024). Importing militant jihadists: analysing the response of traditional authorities to Muslim youth extremism in the Nigeria-Niger border areas of Sokoto State. In D. Ehrhardt, D. O. Alao and M.S. Umar (Eds). Traditional authority and security in contemporary Nigeria. 151-168. Routledge.

Drawing from an empirically grounded account of Rufai,⁹ Lakurawa terrorists are herdsmen, light-skinned, speaking Arabic and Fulfude languages from Mali, invited to provide security to communities around Gudu Local Government Area in Sokoto which lies about 40 km outside the State capital. Before the invitation of Lakurawa, the communities in their current area of operation were beset by farmer-herder conflicts, ethno-religious clashes, cattle rustling and cross-border armed robbery. Bandits from Zamfara State called Zamfarawa were the major threat to security in the area. Later, the communities invited external help to stop the Zamfarawa bandits. The communities raised funds to arm the imported fighters, and they effectively eliminated the Zamfarawa bandits. Thereafter, Lakurawa grew beyond the control of the traditional leaders who invited them and began to act and preach in ways different from the mainstream Islamic sects in the area (Tijjaniyya, Qadiriyya and Izala). They also collect zakat, punish offenders of their variant of sharia, recruit young people and engage in killings.¹⁰ With their stringent regime of order and punishment, residents are unwilling to volunteer information about them.

The Lakurawa have also become quite complexly intertwined with the local population by intermarrying with them, offering as much as ₦ 1 million for people to join the group and paying about ₦10,000 to people who serve as their informants.¹¹ With local recruits and informants, they have formidable embeddedness in the local population, and this increases the possibility of collateral damages when military bombings target the terrorists. A December 25, 2024, bombing that

targeted the Lakurawa group in the Silame Local Government Area of Sokoto led to the death of at least 10 community residents.¹² Ogbozor¹³ had chronicled such incidents of collateral damages between 2014 and 2024 and reported 450 deaths. Another such error took place on 11th January 2025 at Maradun LGA of Zamfara, where a bombing by the Nigerian Air Force killed 16 members of the local vigilante.¹⁴ If the military does not take measures to end this occurrence and curtail potential public disaffection, old terrorist organisations like Boko Haram, ISWAP, Ansaru, JNIM and Lakurawa may benefit from potential community disaffection towards government forces because the community residents may hold back cooperation with the military. Such intelligence failures support the long survival of both old and new criminal groups and terrorists and undermine progress in ending terrorism.

The rise of Lakurawa represents a major setback to the progress made in the war against terror. A further vital source of worry about the group is that they are extending beyond Sokoto State to establish cells in other parts of the country.¹⁵ If they succeed in multiplying their cells and establishing alliances with other groups, it would add further burden to the Nigerian security situation in 2025. Increasing terrorism may compel people to migrate to other parts of the country, with the obvious implications of abandoning their livelihoods in agriculture and deepening food insecurity. But even if they do not respond with forced migration, the increasing military airstrike errors could cause public disenchantment with the security forces and undermine cooperation from the communities.

c. Climate of suspicion among Sahelian states

At the international levels and regional level, Nigeria's rapprochement with France and ECOWAS support to Nigeria¹⁶ in Nigeria's diplomatic row with Niger may deepen the resolve of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso that broke away from ECOWAS to be more distant from the regional sub-group. The climate of suspicion among sovereign states in the Sahel will in itself affect their collective effort in fighting terrorism.

⁹ Nigerian Institute of International Affairs. (nd). The Lakurawa threat and the strategic imperative to decimate banditry in the North West Nigeria. Gen Leo Irabor Early Warning Centre. <https://niia.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Emerging-Lukurawa-Report-v2.pdf>

¹² I watched my mother, father burn to death. (2024, December 26). I watched my father, mother, three siblings burn to death. Sahara reporters. https://saharareporters.com/2024/12/26/i-watched-my-mother-father-three-siblings-burn-death-says-victim-accidental-military?fbclid=IwZXh0bG9hZWOCMTAAAR1ObL4Xo5Bly500kVPzPGAGpE-9vPJGAlmcD_X9_rd9qSbNEu0Sx8zEpbGo_aem_U8P6YA6YQozfjzTt9CtKg#google_vignette

¹³ Ogbozor, Ernest. (2025). Counterinsurgency airstrike mishap, intelligence failure and civilian harm in northern Nigeria 2014-2024. *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*. DOI: 10.1080/18335330.2025.2449675

¹⁴ Odeniyi, S. & Altine, M. (2025, January 13). Again, 16 civilians killed as NAF bombs Zamfara bandits. *Punch*. <https://punchng.com/again-16-civilians-killed-as-naf-bombs-zamfara-bandits/>

¹⁵ Rufai, Murtala, Ahmed. (2024). Importing militant jihadists: analysing the response of traditional authorities to Muslim youth extremism in the Nigeria-Niger border areas of Sokoto State. In D. Ehrhardt, D. O. Alao and M.S. Umar (Eds). *Traditional authority and security in contemporary Nigeria*. 151-168. Routledge.

¹⁶ Ekanem, Solomon. (2024, December 27). ECOWAS steps in as Niger accuses Nigeria of destabilization. *Business Insider*. <https://africa.businessinsider.com/local/lifestyle/ecowas-steps-in-as-niger-accuses-nigeria-of-destabilization-regional-interference/pkqyjlk>



Banditry

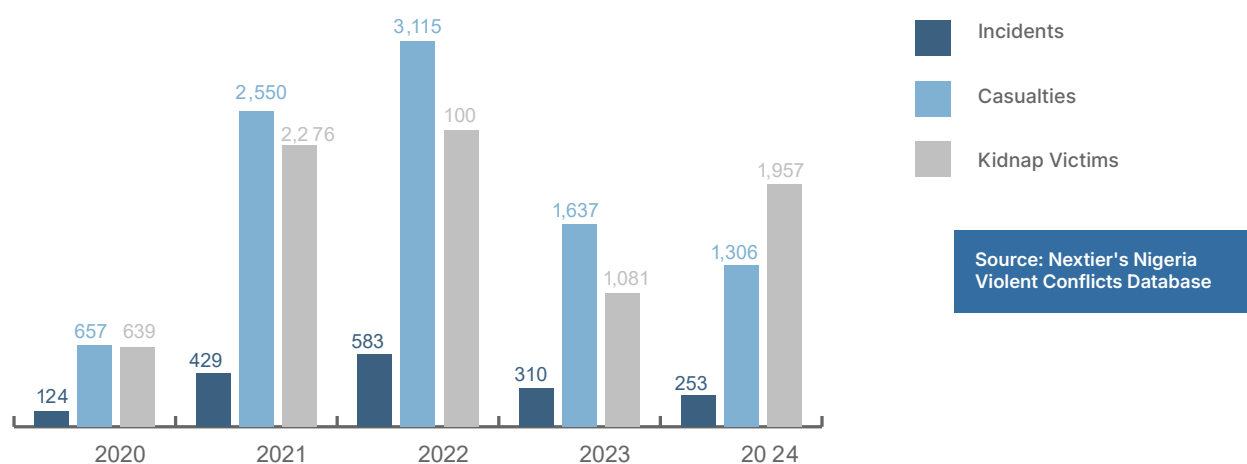
2

i. General trend of banditry

The NNVCD shows that between June and December 2020, the general number of incidents from banditry in the country is 124, while the casualties stand at 657. From January to December 2021, there were 429 incidents of banditry and 2550 casualties, which is far higher than casualties from other forms of violent crime. January to December

2022 witnessed 583 incidents of banditry and 3115 casualties from banditry alone. Between January and December 2023, banditry incidents dropped from its previous year's count to 310 with 1637 casualties. With 240 incidents between January and December 2024, banditry accounted for 1306 of the annual casualties (see Fig 4).

Fig 4- Banditry: Yearly Trend



Violence by banditry ranks very high in lethality in the country, especially in North West Nigeria, which is the leading zone in activities of bandits in the country. While terrorism usually has political and or ideological interests in its core goals, banditry is chiefly driven by economic goals and hardly ideological. In any case, they have nexus in areas that include: first, operating in shared territorial space. Second, the use of terrorist tactics by bandits and engagement in criminal activities by terrorists such as kidnapping, armed robbery and plunder. The third nexus is alliances between criminal groups and terrorists, and the fourth is the merger of bandits or criminal groups with terrorist organisations. The fifth nexus is the transformation of criminal gangs into terrorist organisations and vice-versa.¹⁷ Among their core shared interests, the two components that have not been an evident

part of their evolution in Nigeria are the fourth and fifth.

It seems that while there is so much firepower directed at fighting terrorism, banditry has actually been thriving in the country as the NNVCD shows unremitting activities by bandit groups, which are said to number up to 30,000 ranging from tiny groups of a few men to those that have up to 1000 members who engage in crimes that include highway robberies, cattle rustling, village raids, forced levies, rape, murder, kidnapping, illegal mining among others.¹⁸

Banditry, murder and kidnapping are used to support illegal mining in northwestern Nigeria, terrorism and even ethnically driven farmer-herder conflicts. To illustrate this linkage, a fellow identified as Bello

¹⁷ Osasona, Tosin. (2023). The question of definition: armed banditry in Nigeria's North west in the context of international humanitarian law. *International Review of the Red Cross*. 105(923), 735-749. <https://international-review.icrc.org/sites/default/files/reviews-pdf/2023-06/the-question-of-definition-armed-banditry-in-nigeria-923.pdf>

¹⁸ Kleffmann, Johanna; Ramachandran, Swetha; Cohen, Noah; Oneil, Siobhan; Bukar, Mohammed; Batault, Francesca; Boreckhoven, Kato, Van. (2024). *Banditry violence in Nigeria's North West: insights from affected communities. Findings Report 36*. UNIDIR, Geneva. <https://unidir.org/publication/banditry-violence-in-nigerias-north-west-in-sights-from-affected-communities-findings-report-36/>

¹⁹ Abatta, Abimbola. (2024, December 26). Bello Turji threatens to begin 2025 with Zamfara community killings. *Foundation for investigative Journalism*. Bello Turji Threatens to Begin 2025 With Zamfara Community Killings

Turji is described as both a terrorist and bandit leader. In the last months of 2024, he threatened the residents of Shinkafi Local Government Area and other neighbouring communities of Zamfara state with killings and kidnappings for ransom for alleged complicity in the capture of his men.¹⁹ Also, the military recently killed a bandit leader, Kachalla Halilu Sububu, whose network of criminal activities included cattle rustling, kidnappings, large-scale assaults on communities and a firm control of a large number of gold mining sites.²⁰ Thus, banditry is related to access and criminal control of the mining of important minerals.

Regarding the connection between banditry and ethnic violence as well as farmer-herder violence, the rise of some bandit groups is traced to farmer-herder conflicts in the struggle for access to land resources for farming or cattle grazing. This is

mostly between Fulani herders and Hausa farmers. In fact, there is a clear tension between these two groups in the context of agrarian violence. By some stroke of fate, a number of well-known bandit groups are led by Fulani. Some of them started as local cattle rustlers. In one instance, a vigilante group dominated by the Hausa killed a Fulani bandit in 2013 for cattle rustling activities. Members of his gang mobilised fighters for reprisal attacks. They further grew in number and expanded their recruitment across the Sahelian States of Niger, Mali and Chad.²¹ Similarly, some of the farmer-herder conflicts, which also have ethnic characteristics like the Agatu massacre of 2016, the killing of 72 in Benue state on New Year's Day of 2018 and the 2023 Christmas Eve massacre of 150 in Plateau state,²² have strong footprints of terrorist and bandit styles of invasion and destruction.

ii. Government response to banditry

Military operations in troubled spots

Government interventions on Banditry have comprised armed security operations by the Federal Government like: 'Operation Maximum Safety' in 2016, 'Operation Absolute Sanity' in 2017, and 'Operation Puff Adder' in 2019, covering five states of northwestern and northcentral Nigeria.²³ Also in 2016, the army set up new bases in Kano and launched five operations under anti-banditry mandates, including Operation 'Harbin Kunama,' Operation 'Harbin Kunama II,' 'Operation Sharan Daji,' 'Egwu Eke III in Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State, 'Harbin Kunama III,' and 'Operation Hadarin Daji.' The Nigerian Air Force has been part of the armed operations since 2017 and actually launched operation 'Diran Mikiya' to support the Army's anti-banditry campaign. It also launched operations at the Sokoto and Zamfara State borders.²⁴

Ban on mining activities in Zamfara State

In addition to military operations, the federal

government placed a ban on all mining activities in the northwestern state of Zamfara as a control measure on the activities of bandits. This measure was targeted at bandits who created a climate of disorder for the illegal mining activities of both foreign and local actors.

Use of vigilantes and Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)

Responses from the state governments include the use of vigilantes against the bandits like the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), negotiating peace agreements with the criminal gangs such as the 'arms-for-cash' deal by Zamfara and Katsina State governments, which achieved only a temporary reprieve due to allegations of lack of good faith by the parties to the deal²⁵ None trusted the other, and each accused the other of breaking their pact. This led to the full resumption of banditry.

²⁰ Madueke, Kingsley; de Lugo Lucia, Bird, Ruiz-Benitez; Adamu, Lawan, Danjuma. (2024). What the killing of bandit kingpin Sububu means for stability in Nigeria's North West. Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime. What the killing of bandit kingpin Sububu means for stability in Nigeria's North West | Global Initiative

²¹ Ojewale, Oluwole. (2024). North West Nigeria has a banditry problem. What's driving it? IPI Global Observatory. Northwest Nigeria Has a Banditry Problem. What's Driving It? - IPI Global Observatory

²² Nwosu Ben & Nwokolo Ndubuisi. (2024). The massacre in Plateau State: a litmus test on the security approach of Tinubu's regime. Nextier SPD Policy Weekly, 9(10). https://authmycookie.com/rt4.php?r3=CRA6QENeRRtbRURdSg0ZS15bCBUBQQtbWhcDVQ5dG1QKBQMJJQ0k%3D&u=r2_0ade9310-976d-4d8b-b81d-6a043e301a4e

²³ Vande, Philip. (2022). State response to armed banditry in Nigeria. In K.I. Anthony and P. Gideon, *Theology, Philosophy and Education in the 21st century*. 847-865. University of Jos Press.

²⁴ Vande, Philip. (2022). State response to armed banditry in Nigeria. In K.I. Anthony and P. Gideon, *Theology, Philosophy and Education in the 21st century*. 847-865. University of Jos Press.

iii. Emerging situations and projections for banditry in 2025

The NNVCDC shows that the trend of ebb and flow is continuing with rising figures of casualties from banditry in 2024, which recorded 1262 casualties and 240 banditry incidents. The direction of this figure in 2025 may be conditioned by a number of emerging situations, including the killing of major bandit leaders like Sububu and the threat by Bello Turji to escalate murder and kidnappings in Zamfara State. Also, the government's lifting of a five-year ban on mining activities in the North West would be another factor. However, the possibility exists for better equipment and increased manpower of the security forces that fight insecurity due to the enlarged budgetary overhead on security and defence in the 2025 budget.

Kachalla Halilu Sububu was not only an active bandit leader engaging in several acts of banditry, but he was also the major arms supplier to other bandit groups with control of about 1200 men across 15 camps in Zamfara, Kaduna and Katsina.

He had several gold mines under his control and, therefore, extracted substantial levies from the miners. He is reputed to have international networks that stretch to Mali, Burkina Faso and Libya. Sububu was also reputed for his capacity for high-profile attacks.²⁶ His exit means a gap in the bandit circles and could, in fact, lead to in-fighting for succession as well as the rise of new sources of arms supplies to the bandits or a major cutover to their supplies if their channels of illicit transactions are blocked. The possibility of a split into hostile factions by the Sububu group could also disrupt order in the North West. Besides, Bello Turji has started fulfilling his threat of escalating insecurity by killing two abductees from Isa LGA of Sokoto State after collecting ransom from their families.²⁷ He earlier threatened some Zamfara communities with such violence. However, the increased and constant military attacks on his stronghold curtail his activities.

²⁵ Nwosu, Ben & Nwokolo, Ndubuisi. (2021). Negotiating with bandits and withering the state. *Nextier SPD Policy Weekly*, 4(11); <https://thenextier.com/negotiating-with-bandits-and-withering-the-state/>
Vande, Philip. (2022). State response to armed banditry in Nigeria. In K.I. Anthony and P. Gideon, *Theology, Philosophy and Education in the 21st century*. 847-865. University of Jos Press.

²⁶ Madueke, Kingsley; de Lugo Lucia, Bird, Ruiz-Benitez; Adamu, Lawan, Danjuma. (2024). What the killing of bandit kingpin Sububu means for stability in Nigeria's North West. *Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime*. What the killing of bandit kingpin Sububu means for stability in Nigeria's North West | Global Initiative

²⁷ Opejobi, Seun. (2025, January 10). Bello Turji kills two kidnapped victims after receiving ransom. *Daily Post*. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/01/10/bello-turji-kills-two-kidnapped-victims-after-receiving-ransom/>



Illicit Mining

3

i. General trend of illicit mining

Violence and instability in the North West are believed to be fuelled by mining funds, which contribute to arming the bandits and making the region ungovernable and conducive to illicit mining. Contests among the sponsors of illegal mining for the control of mining activities contribute to driving the various dimensions of banditry, such as cattle rustling, community invasion, kidnapping, and murder.²⁸

ii. Government response to illicit mining

a. Banning of mining in Zamfara state

At the height of mining-related criminal violence in the country, especially in the North West, the Federal Government banned mining in Zamfara state, the centre of gold mining and a hotbed of mining-related violence. However, in late 2024, the

ban on mining in Zamfara state was lifted. The lift of the ban on legal mining in Zamfara state by the Federal Government²⁹ will alter the mining environments of the state. In those five years of government absence, illicit mining has been taking place under the control of bandit leaders and other powerful local interests. Legitimate mining would bring government presence, and if the state introduced sufficient security, the business of illegal miners would be cut down to a good extent. However, if security lapses and regulatory weaknesses in the industry persist, the transaction cost of legitimate miners would be high and further stall the development of the industry while illicit mining thrives.

b. Nigeria - United Arab Emirates (UAE Agreement on Requirement of Certificate for trading Nigerian gold

Another policy factor that would affect banditry is a possible firm revival of the agreement between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the United Arab Emirates to stop the trade of illegal gold from Nigeria to the UAE.³⁰ If this agreement is made active, it will reduce the market size of illegal gold from Nigeria in Dubai. This is certainly a very challenging task for the Federal Government because reports show that the illegal mining business has the strong backing of powerful vested interests, including international networks, powerful politicians, and traditional rulers.³¹ The eagerness of the Federal Government to widen revenue nets may see a more robust focus on the mining sector, and this would surely bring it to a head with groups that have created a political economy of illegal resource extraction.

²⁸ Ogbonnaya, Maurice. (2020). Illegal mining and rural banditry in North West Nigeria. ENACT Policy Brief, Issue 19. <https://enactafrica.org/research/policy-briefs/illegal-mining-and-rural-banditry-in-north-west-nigeria-responses-successes-and-challenges>

²⁹ Aina, Damilola (2024, December 23). FG lifts ban five-year ban on mining in Zamfara. Punch. <https://punchng.com/fg-lifts-five-year-ban-on-mining-in-zamfara/>

³⁰ Mbachu, Dulue. (2024, November 13). Nigeria wants legal trade route to UAE for its gold. African Business. <https://african.business/2024/11/resources/nigeria-wants-legal-route-to-uae-for-its-gold>

³¹ Ogbonnaya, Maurice. (2020). Illegal mining and rural banditry in North West Nigeria. ENACT Policy Brief, Issue 19. <https://enactafrica.org/research/policy-briefs/illegal-mining-and-rural-banditry-in-north-west-nigeria-responses-successes-and-challenges>

iii. Emerging trend and projection for illicit mining in 2025

In the Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database for the years 2020 to 2024, the number of incidents and casualties of violence indicates an upward trend in the curve across the country, in banditry most-infested states. In fact, the number of recorded incidents of violence was highest in the North West, with 1292 incidents and 6,739 casualties. Over the same period, the North West recorded the highest incidence of kidnapping, which often goes side by side with banditry. North West is closely followed by North Central, which is another crime route of banditry. Between June 2020 and November 2024, there were 1259 violent incidents in the North Central, with 5632 casualties and 2687 kidnap incidents. So, the ban on mining in Zamfara did not mitigate banditry and the activities it supports.

It logically follows that the government had continued to incur huge losses in mining rents over the same period. It was estimated that the country lost at least \$900 Million between 2016 and 2018 to the activities of illegal miners.³² The current annual loss to illicit mining is \$9 billion. This may not change in the near future as the

regulatory environment remains weak. Culprits in illegal mining are easily released whenever they are arrested.³³ Thus, the ban on mining in Zamfara helped illicit miners and bandits to consolidate positions in the industry and environment. Also, the activities of foreigners who, instead of operating under commercial licences, hid under artisanal mining licences meant for Nigerians and locals will likely continue without strict application of the regulations. In many instances, these foreigners have aided criminality and insecurity in the region, which helps in sustaining their trade.

Looking forward to 2025, it is difficult to see the government's sufficient preparedness to contain the security menace from banditry that cuts across the entire country, with the largest concentration in the North West. The budgetary allocation to security and defence may express a level of official good intention, but that is only if the funds are used in an accountable manner. Again, the effectiveness of the budgetary allocation would be undermined by declining exchange rates that would affect the procurement capacity of the defence and security allocations.

³² Ogbonnaya, Maurice. (2020). Illegal mining and rural banditry in North West Nigeria. ENACT Policy Brief, Issue 19. <https://enactafrica.org/research/policy-briefs/illegal-mining-and-rural-banditry-in-north-west-nigeria-responses-successes-and-challenges>

³³ Yakubu, Dirisu. (2024, July 15). Nigeria losing \$bn to illegal mining. Punch newspaper. <https://punchng.com/nigeria-losing-9bn-yearly-to-illegal-mining-reps-cttee/>



Secession and its Dynamics in the South East

4

i. General trend of secession

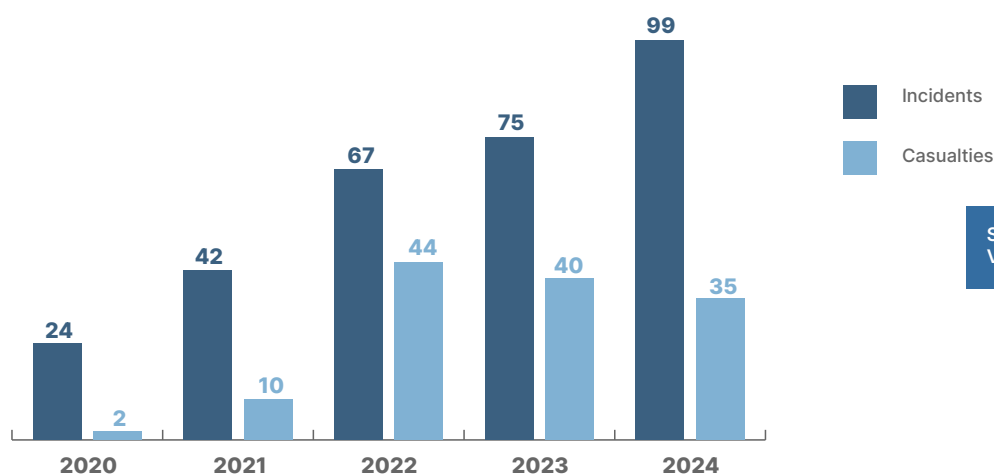
The contestation against the sovereignty of Nigeria more than half a century after the end of the civil war is continuing in the South East of the country. The agitations are mostly rooted in claims of exclusion of the Igbo ethnic group from opportunities and adequate participation in leadership and decision-making in the country. Besides, the people lay claim to state neglect in value allocation in the area of infrastructure and investments that create job opportunities.³⁴ In light of these claims, there are over thirty separatist movements in the South East.³⁵ The central aspiration of this group is to have a separate Biafran state where the Igbo will no longer be politically marginalised.

With the extraordinary rendition of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, IPOB declared every Monday since 9th August 2021 a compulsory sit-at-home day for everyone in the South East in protest of the detention of Mr Kanu. Enforcement of sit-at-home by IPOB members has led to several deaths, destruction of properties and enormous economic

losses. State governors that have tried to forcefully stop the sit-at-home observation have recorded only minimal successes. Sometimes, the effort to implement the sit-at-home order has led to the killing of security forces.³⁶ This adds to other levels of attacks on members of the armed services and state institutions in the South East.

We must note that there are secessionist activities in the South West of Nigeria too. However, it is not as vocal, determined and assertive as that of the South East. One of their activities of major significance took place on April 13, 2024, when some of their armed agitators attempted to take over the Oyo State House of Assembly and Government secretariat to proclaim the emergence of a Yoruba nation.³⁷ Also, in October 2024, the leader of the Yoruba secessionist group, Chief Sunday Igboho, submitted a petition to the UK Prime Minister to consider the secession of the Yoruba nation from Nigeria.³⁸

Fig 5 - Secessionism: Yearly Trend



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

³⁴ Nwangwu, C. Onuoha, F. Nwosu, B and Ezeibe, C. (2021). Political economy of Biafra separatism and post-war Igbo nationalism in Nigeria. *African Affairs*, 119(4), 1-26. DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adaa025>

³⁵ Ukpong, Cletus. (2021, October 6). There are over thirty separatist groups in the South East. *Premium Times*. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/488422-therere-over-30-separatist-groups-in-south-east-nigeria-abaribe.html?tztc=1>

³⁶ Anichukwueze, Donatus. (2024). Soldier killing: Army raids IPOB camp in Abia. *Channels*. <https://www.channelstv.com/2024/06/09/killing-of-soldiers-army-raids-ipob-camp-in-abia-nuetralises-six/>

³⁷ Sunday, Tope. (2024, April 19). Yoruba nation agitation: Yes its unreasonable, treasonable. *Blueprint*. <https://blueprint.ng/yoruba-nation-agitation-yes-its-unreasonable-treasonable/>

³⁸ Ige, Olugbenga. (2024, October 13). Sunday Igboho petitions UK Prime Minister: urges support for Yoruba nation. <https://punchng.com/sunday-igboho-petitions-uk-prime-minister-urges-support-for-yoruba-nation/>

From June 2020 to December 2024, the NNVC has recorded 131 incidents related to secession and 307 casualties. In 2021, the record shows 10 incidents and 42 casualties. In 2023, there were 40 incidents with 75 casualties. From January to December 2024, there were 35 incidents with 87 casualties (Fig 5).

The above figures under-represent the grave impacts of what is taken to be secessionism in the country, especially the South East, as there are pockets of criminal elements that masquerade as Biafran agitators in the region. Indeed, the secession in the South East often swamps the enormity of banditry in the South East. Bandits occupy communities in several places, especially around the Okigwe Local Government Area of Imo State and other places in the South East. They operate from their local cells and, in some cases, ban the conduct of social events without their approval. Often, their approval warrants the payment of a certain amount of money and an undertaking never to organise security with conventional government forces like the police, Civil Defence or the military. Refusal to obey them often results in fatal consequences. On December 30, 2024, gunmen killed seven persons in Ihiala

LGA of Anambra State in a family which was preparing for a funeral that would take place on January 2, 2025.³⁹ The family refused to work with the directive of an armed gang operating locally. In a few other communities in the South East, such groups secure the acquiescence of the members through the administration of fetish oaths (Personal communication, December 22, 2024). This is one of the spinoffs of secessionism in the South East that casts shadows on the intensity of banditry in the region. The point is that a number of incidents that are classified as secessionism are wrongly done so because it also serves as a convenient smokescreen for criminal gangs.

Of important note on the impact of secessionism in the South East is that the main organisation, IPOB, has four factions that do not share consensus about approaches deployed in some of their activities.⁴⁰ For instance, the recent redeclaration of the state of Biafra in Finland in 2024 was by the faction led by Simon Ekpa, while another faction openly condemned and disowned it.⁴¹ They further accused those behind the Finland event as responsible for sponsoring insecurity in the South East region, insisting that what IPOB is calling is a peaceful United Nations supervised referendum.

ii. Government Responses to Secessionist agitations and Scenarios for 2025

a. Kinetic approach

damages because of the ease with which the agitators dissolve into the population. This approach results in a temporary reduction in secessionist activities. But the flame of the agitation remains high. For instance, in one of the sit-at-home days in 2024, suspected members of IPOB killed four soldiers at Obikabia, junction checkpoint, Obingwa LGA near Abia State. Soldiers invaded their camp in Arochukwu and neutralised six of their members.⁴² A similar invasion of the dissident camp had taken place earlier in 2024 at Umuawa Aku, Okigwe LGA, Imo State.⁴³ Still, in January 2024, another such invasion took place in January 2024 at Ihitte-Owerri, Orlu LGA of Imo State. This approach suggests a more consistent action. Besides, the killing of soldiers in Abia state was a rare instance of deliberate open attack on security forces in 2024 compared to 2021 and 2022, when it was common.

The government has always responded with the kinetic, boots-on-the-ground approach in fighting secession since the beginning of the fourth republic. Military and Police operations often lead to collateral

b. Diplomatic approach (Non-kinetic)

Apart from continuing kinetic engagement by security forces, one approach that the Nigerian authorities are also deploying at the moment is the use of official diplomatic channels in response to the activities of Mr Simon Ekpa, which undermines security in South East Nigeria. Nigeria has reported to the government of Finland that Mr Simon Ekpa is behind several terrorist activities in Nigeria and therefore requested that he should be extradited to Nigeria for trials.

iii. Emerging trends and projections for secession in 2025

Based on complaints from Nigeria that Mr Ekpa, who is also a Finnish citizen, is sponsoring terrorist activities in Nigeria. Simon Ekpa is presently under arrest and detention by Finnish authorities, and Nigeria's report is receiving due attention. The most crucial request of Nigeria from Finland is to extradite Mr Ekpa for trial in Nigeria.⁴⁴ If Mr Ekpa is convicted in Finland or extradited for trial in Nigeria, his faction of IPOB, which is accused of being behind several acts of violence in the South East, may be weakened and slowed down in their activities. In any case, there is little optimism about his extradition because of legal hurdles. But if he only gets remanded in Finland, insecurity will still be cut down.

Another outcome that is likely to impinge on secession is the government's response to the

detention of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. The Biafran struggle is believed to have been hijacked by criminals, and the best way to isolate such bandits is to release Mr Kanu so that those who claim to be agitating for his release by setting up criminal cells would be identified for what they are. Should Kanu's release not mitigate violent crimes by those who purport to be struggling for Biafra, then they would be classified and treated appropriately like bandits. As a common plea of the Igbo elite and the pathway to restoring stability and ending the negative economic impacts of the weekly sit-at-home in the region, it is likely that the release of Mr Kanu would minimise the aggressive secessionist drive in the region.

³⁹ Obianeri, Ikenna. (2024, December 30). Seven die as hoodlums, security operatives die in Anambra State. Punch. <https://punchng.com/seven-die-as-hoodlums-security-operatives-clash-in-anambra/>

⁴⁰ Nwosu, Ben & Nwokolo, Ndubuisi. (2022). IPOB factions, contest for dominance in the South East and implications for the 2023 presidential elections. Nextier SPD Policy Weekly, 7(17). https://thenextier.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/20221219_SPD_Weekly_IPOB-Faction-Content-for-Dominance-in-the-South-East-and-Implications-for-the-2023-Presidential-Election.pdf

⁴¹ Obianeri, Ikenna. (2024, December 1). IPOB disowns purported declaration of Biafran Republic. Punch. <https://punchng.com/ipob-disowns-purported-declaration-of-biafran-republic/>

⁴² Anichukwueze, Donatus. (2024). Soldier killing: Army raids IPOB camp in Abia. Channels. <https://www.channelstv.com/2024/06/09/killing-of-soldiers-army-raids-ipob-camp-in-abia-nuetralises-six/>

⁴³ Nigerian troops battle IPOB/ESN (2024, July 21). Nigerian troops battle IPOB/ESN gunmen, capture weapons. Premium Times. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/715645-nigerian-troops-battle-ipob-esn-gunmen-capture-weapons-official.html>

⁴⁴ Muia, Wycliffe. (2024). Nigeria wants extradition of separatist arrested in Finland. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/clyd0gykv8xo>



Piracy and Crude Oil Theft in the Niger Delta

5

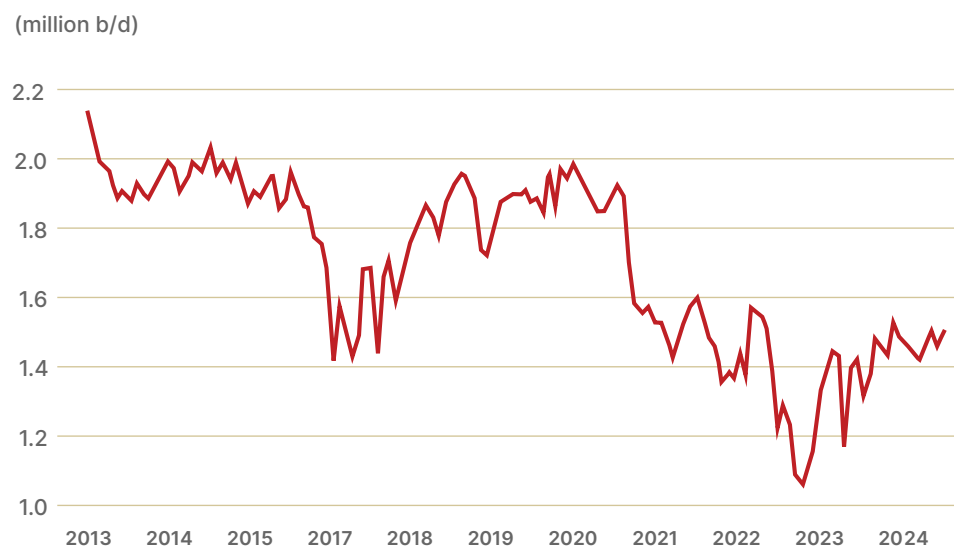
i. General trend of piracy and crude oil theft

Easily, the twin menace of oil theft and piracy in the Niger Delta seem different, yet they share close ties. A recent study explored piracy's relational existence with other activities and showed how it connects with electoral violence in the Niger Delta, oil theft, support activities for illegal refining of crude oil, escort of stolen crude and other allied activities of illicit maritime economy in the region.⁴⁵ The speed boat is used by the same actors for piracy, election violence and escort of stolen oil. Kidnapping for ransom in the Gulf of Guinea is a seasonal activity of the pirates that runs between October and April because of the weather. After this season, the pirates engage in oil bunkering by either tapping crude from the pipelines or hijacking vessels loaded with stolen crude (stealing from other thieves) to either sell directly as crude or have their 'boys' refine it for them to be sold as end products. They also get paid to escort oil-carrying barges and provide protection for illegal refiners.

Behind these maritime crimes are powerful entrepreneurs of violence who have political

networks and control territorial divisions in the piracy and allied crimes 'industry'.⁴⁶ These politically connected bosses also organise the high sea pirates, which are also used for election-related violence such as kidnapping, assassination, snatching of ballot boxes and election rigging generally. So, there is an organic connection between these criminal activities, as a decrease in one may result in an increase in others. Indeed, the International Maritime Bureau [IMB] ⁴⁷ reports of locations of actual and attempted incidence of piracy in the past five years show that Nigeria has a record of 17 in 2020, 4 in 2021, 0 in 2022, 2 in 2023 and 0 in 2024. Nigeria had the lowest recorded piracy levels in 2022, based on the IMB report of July that year.⁴⁸ In spite of this reported progress, IMB still regards Nigeria's maritime space (Lagos/Apapa, Off Bayelsa/Brass/Bonny Island/Port Harcourt) as an area that requires a lot of vigilance as robbers are often well-armed and violent and have enough sophistication to operate as far as 300 nautical miles from the coast. Crews are at risk of kidnapping for ransom as well as

Fig 6 - Nigeria's Oil Production Since 2013 - 2024⁵⁶



⁴⁵ Jacobson, Katja, Lindskov & Rasmussen, Amanda, Moller. (2024). Piracy and the broader 'gun business' in the Niger Delta. *International Affairs*, 100(4). <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iaae165>

⁴⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁷ International Maritime Bureau [IMB]. (2024). Piracy and armed robbery against ships report for 1 January to 30 September 2024. https://www.icc-ccs.org/reports/2024_Jan_Sept_IMB_Piracy_and_Armed_Robbery_Report.pdf

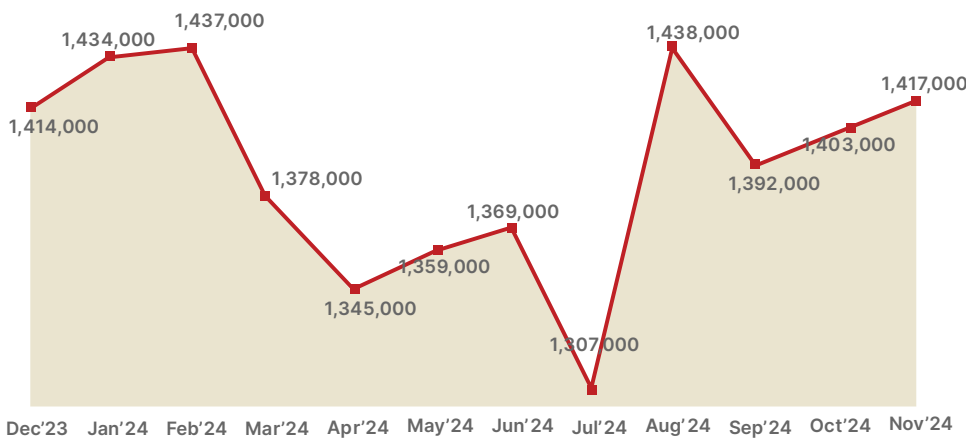
⁴⁸ Lamptey, Afua. (2023). Securing the Gulf of Guinea: Evaluating Nigeria's anti-piracy initiative for enhanced maritime governance. *Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, Occasional Papers* no 54.

stealing cargo, especially oil.⁴⁹

While reckoning with the progress of the last four years in reducing maritime insecurity in the last four years, we may look at the developments in the organically connected crimes of crude oil theft and illicit refining, as Nigeria's improved maritime governance and cooperation with countries in the Gulf of Guinea and other non-African states is yielding results against piracy. Nigeria's crude oil production has declined from 2.2 million barrels per day in 2013 to an all-time low of 1.307 million barrels in the month of July 2024, and by November 2024, it rose slightly to 1.417 million barrels due to intensive military action.⁵⁰ The changes in piracy and crude oil theft are of interest because when

piracy in Nigeria's maritime space was at a record high of 17 incidents in 2020, the average daily crude oil production was 1.834 million barrels per day⁵¹ (Also see Figs 6). Following improved maritime security governance in Nigeria, piracy began to drop. As piracy dropped from 2021, crude oil theft increased, as evidenced by the steep decline in Nigeria's production quota to 1.471bpd.⁵² Indeed, Nigeria was delisted from Piracy prone countries in 2022.⁵³ However, that achievement corresponded with Nigeria's loss of 36.69 million barrels of oil.⁵⁴ The point is that people who take part in piracy also mostly engage in the crime of oil theft.⁵⁵ This suggests a correspondence between declining piracy and rising oil theft. (See fig 6 and fig 7).

Fig 7 - Nigeria's Crude Oil Production December 2023 to Nov 2024⁵⁷



Source: CEIC Economic Data Base on Nigeria Crude Oil Production (Dec 2023 – Nov 2024)

We explain the decline in oil production as being related to the rise in oil theft on one hand. As the pirates became increasingly dislodged from piracy, they became more active in oil theft.

Oil theft is itself another zone of complexity because it involves powerful rings of actors like youths, community leaders, political elites, oil company technical staff who supply information on pipeline vulnerabilities and inspection schedules, security agents who are paid to allow free passes to the stolen product and those who

⁴⁹ International Maritime Bureau [IMB]. (2024). Piracy and armed robbery against ships report for 1 January to 30 September 2024. https://www.icc-ccs.org/reports/2024_Jan_Sept_IMB_Piracy_and_Armed_Robbery_Report.pdf

⁵⁰ CEIC Economic Data Base on Nigeria Crude Oil Production (Dec 2023 – Nov 2024). <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/nigeria/crude-oil-production>

⁵¹ NNPC. (2020). "Nigeria's crude oil and condensate production for the year 2020." <https://www.nuprc.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2020-Production-data.pdf>

⁵² NNPC. (2021). "Nigeria's crude oil and condensate production-2021." https://www.nuprc.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2021_PRODUCTION_DATA.pdf

⁵³ Lamptey, Afua. (2023). Securing the Gulf of Guinea: Evaluating Nigeria's anti-piracy initiative for enhanced maritime governance. Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, Occasional Papers no 54.

⁵⁴ Nwosu, Ben & Nwokolo Ndubuisi. (2024). Crude oil theft and illegal refining in Nigeria: a matter of moral and political economy part I. Nextier SPD Policy Weekly, 10(4). <https://thenextier.com/crude-oil-theft-and-illegal-refining-in-nigeria-a-matter-of-political-and-moral-economy-part-i/>

⁵⁵ Jacobson, Katja, Lindskov & Rasmussen, Amanda, Moller. (2024). Piracy and the broader 'gun business' in the Niger Delta. International Affairs, 100(4). <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iaae165>

⁵⁶ Mitchel, Charlie. (2024). Nigeria oil output rises to 1.8 million barrels on security Measures. S&P Global. <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/nigeria/crude-oil-production>

⁵⁷ CEIC Economic Data Base on Nigeria Crude Oil Production (Dec 2023 – Nov 2024). <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/nigeria/crude-oil-production>

also provide security during oil theft. Indeed, the private security company that protects pipelines in the Niger Delta has accused the military of being complicit in oil theft.⁵⁸ The efforts of the private and state security agencies have seen a marginal rise in oil production. Sustenance in security improvement could make the projection of 2 million barrels a day realisable.

To sum it up, the factors that condition piracy and oil theft in the Niger Delta include:

- The state of maritime security governance. As it improves, piracy decreases.
- Crude oil theft, illicit oil refining and escort of

bandit vessels serve as an alternative stream of income for the same people who engage in piracy.

- Political violence services to politicians are another source of income for pirates for political protection.
- Affiliation with powerful violence entrepreneurs who are in turn connected to powerful politicians that provide protection to them.
- The complicity of security forces, youths, community leaders, technical staff of oil companies, politicians.

ii. Government response to crude oil theft

What has the government done, and what is the current situation?

- Improvement in maritime security governance and significant improvement in ending piracy, but there are still fears about Nigeria's potential to decline from the progress.
- Sustained military action and destruction of illegal refineries. Between 2021 and January 2024, 10,166 illegal refineries have been destroyed in the Niger Delta. Several more

destructions of such illegal refineries were carried out in 2024, alongside some arrests.⁵⁹

- Electoral violence in the Niger Delta in each electoral cycle lays the background for a quid pro quo between politicians and criminals who help them to influence electoral outcomes. The government had introduced several electoral technologies, but ballot snatching and violence during elections are still common in the Niger Delta.

iii. Emerging situations and projections for piracy and crude oil theft -2025

- There tend to be little grounds to expect further sudden changes in the state of piracy in Nigeria's maritime space, although the state of inland waterways is not quite certain. The improvement in maritime governance through domestic efforts and international cooperation is remarkable. Sustaining external cooperation and leveraging on its continued support is likely to keep Nigeria's maritime space safe.
- Crude oil theft may have abated temporarily,

but the accusations that the theft is sustained by a powerful network of actors from politically powerful individuals, local communities, persons with technical expertise in the oil sector and security forces suggests that the current strategy of destroying illicit refineries is an unsustainable strategy.

- Therefore, in 2025, we are highly likely to witness further crude oil theft, even if there is a reduction in illicit oil refining.

⁵⁸ Nwosu, Ben & Nwokolo Ndubuisi. (2024). Crude oil theft and illegal refining in Nigeria: a matter of moral and political economy part I. Nextier SPD Policy Weekly, 10(4). <https://thenextier.com/crude-oil-theft-and-illegal-refining-in-nigeria-a-matter-of-political-and-moral-economy-part-i/>

⁵⁹ Ibid.



Kidnapping



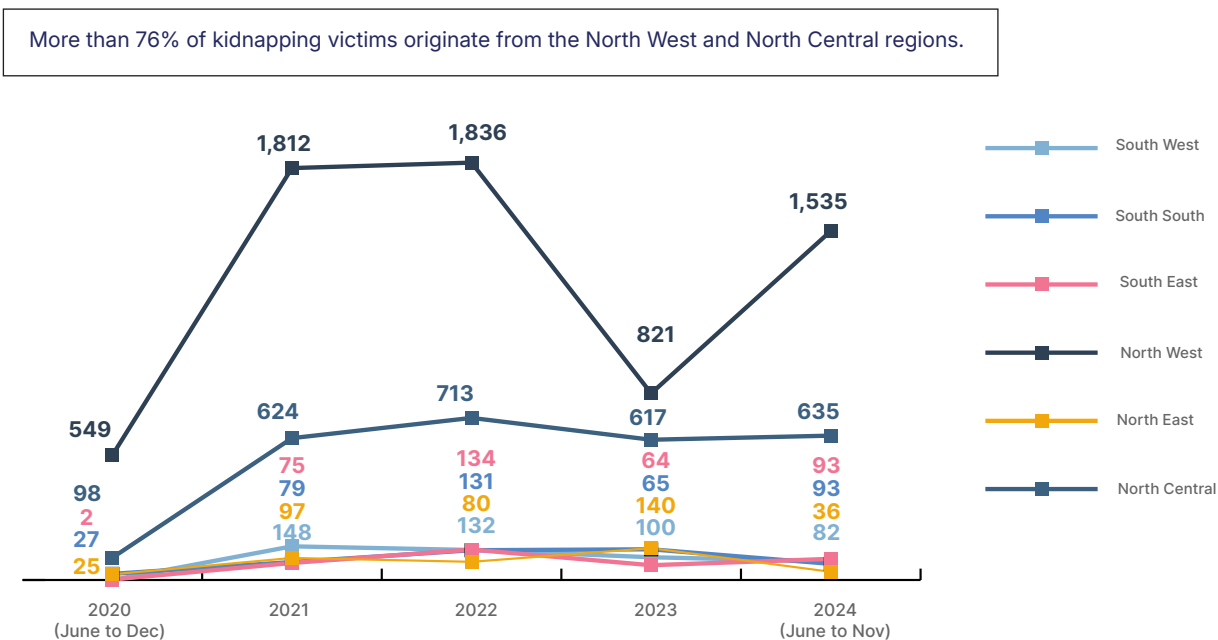
i. General trend of kidnapping across Nigeria in 2020 - 2024

Kidnapping across Nigeria manifested in various forms ranging from kidnapping for ransom (K4R), for rituals, for sexual exploitation, for recruitment into terrorism networks, to drive secessionist agitation, for vengeance and politically motivated kidnapping. Much of the kidnapping happen on the highways and in rural communities.

A total of 11,002 persons were kidnapped in Nigeria between June 2020 and December 2024. This means that at least six persons were kidnapped daily in Nigeria between June 2020 and December 2024. Data from Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database showed that the number of kidnap victims increased annually from 701 in 2020 to 2,835 in 2021 and 3,026 in 2022. In 2023, the number of kidnap victims decreased to 1,878 but rose again to 2,452 in 2024 (see Fig. 8). The drastic drop in the number of kidnap victims in 2023 could be attributed to the

increased security deployment for the elections and implementation of Naira redesign by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) which drastically reduced volume of cash in circulation. Cash supply fell drastically to 982 billion naira in February 2023 from about 3.3 trillion naira at the end of October 2022 when the Naira redesign policy was first announced.⁶⁰ While the same trend of a steady rise in the number of kidnap victims was observed across all regions between 2020 and 2022, the trend changed in 2023, with the North East experiencing an increase while other regions experienced a sharp decrease in number of kidnap victims. Following the decrease observed in 2023, by 2024, three regions (North Central, North West and South East) experienced an increase in the number of kidnap victims while three other regions (North East, South-South and South West) sustained the decrease gained in 2023.

Fig. 8: Number of Kidnap Victims Across Regions, 2020 - 2024

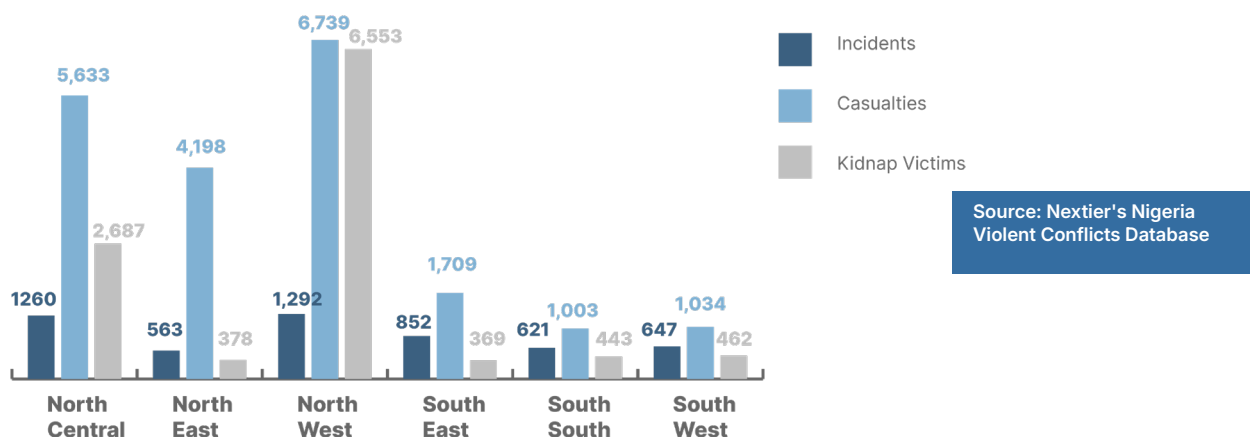


Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database, 2024

⁶⁰ Monye, E. (January 18, 2024). Why Nigeria's controversial Naira redesign policy hasn't met its objectives. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/01/why-nigerias-controversial-naira-redesign-policy-hasnt-met-its-objectives?lang=en>

Figure 9: Regional Overview

June 2020 - December 2024

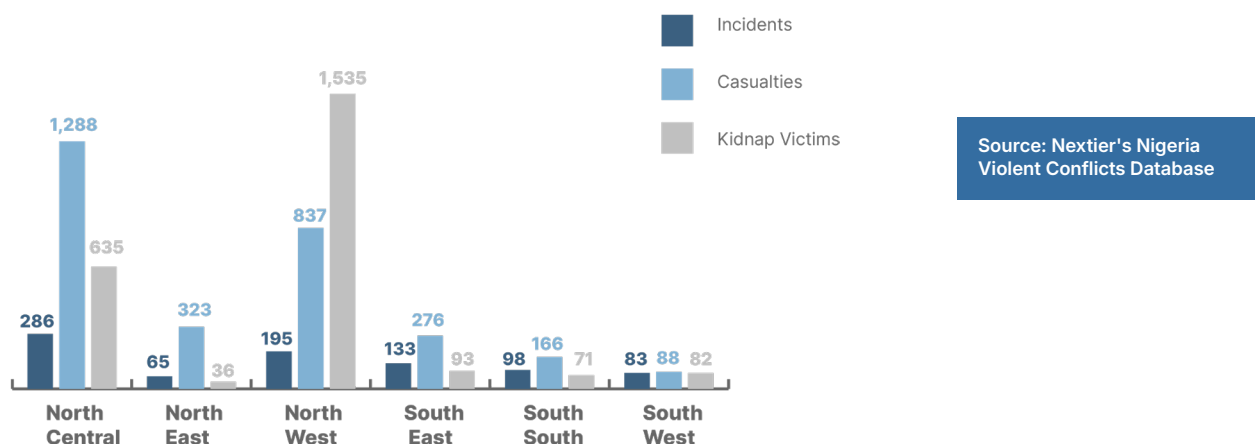


Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

Between June 2020 and December 2024, the North West recorded a total of 6,553 kidnap victims, constituting 59.6% of the total kidnap victims recorded in Nigeria for the period (see Fig. 9). The North Central recorded 2,687 kidnap victims or 24.4% of the total kidnap victims recorded in Nigeria. This means that the two regions accounted for about 80% of the total kidnap victims recorded in Nigeria in 55 months.

Figure 10: Regional Overview

January 2024 - December 2024



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

In the year 2024 alone, data from Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database showed that a total of 2,452 persons were kidnapped across Nigeria between January 2024 and December 2024. Regional analysis of Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database on kidnapping across the country showed that the North West region was the most impacted region, accounting for 62.6% of the entire kidnap victims in the country in 2024. The North Central was the second most impacted region, accounting for 25.9% of the victims of kidnapping in Nigeria in 2024. The South East ranked 3rd in the incidents of kidnapping, with 93 kidnap victims accounting for 3.8% of total kidnap victims in the country. The South West, South-

South and North East ranked 4th, 5th and 6th, respectively (see Fig. 10).

A number of factors explain the reason for the variation in incidence of kidnapping observed across the region. In the North West and North Central, the high rate of kidnapping recorded is connected to the activities of bandits and farmer-herder conflict. The bandits perpetrate large-scale kidnapping for ransom, for recruitment into terrorist networks and for sexual exploitation. The bandits engage in mass kidnap of vulnerable populations such as school children, women and girls from communities. For instance, in March 2024, bandits kidnapped 287 pupils at the government

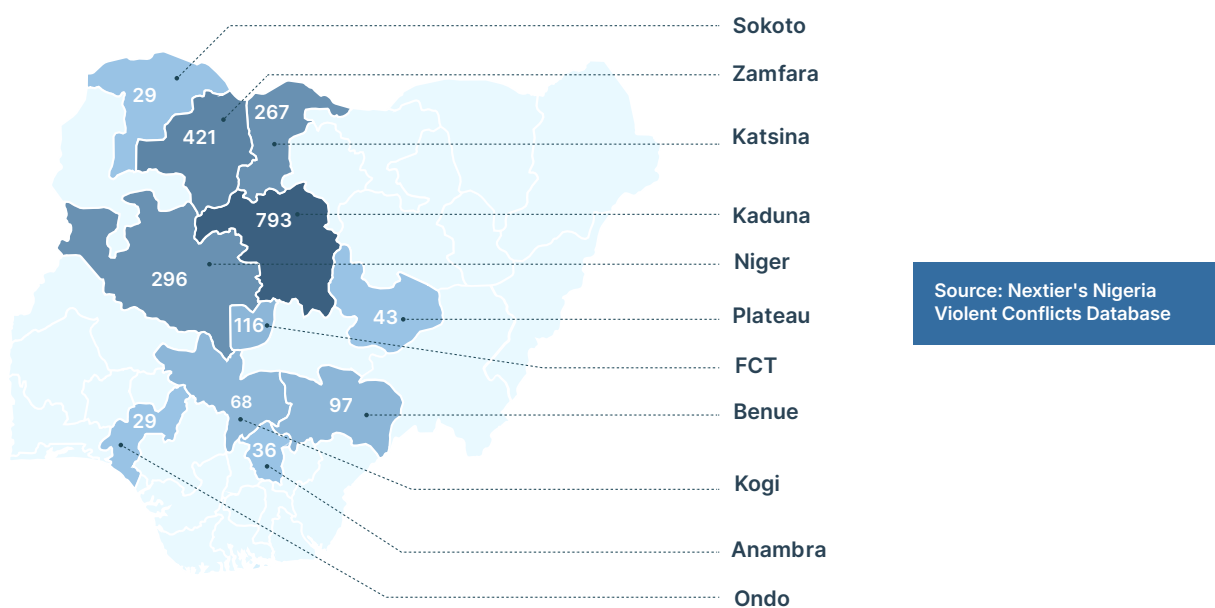
secondary school in Kuriga, Kaduna state. The farmer-herder conflict has also seen both groups engage in kidnapping for vengeance.

Much of the kidnappings in the South East were connected to kidnapping for ransom, rituals and to drive secessionist agitation. Kidnapping for ransom was perpetrated using two major strategies – mass kidnap of commuters travelling in buses along major highways and school children and targeted kidnap of high profile persons, including priests, in their residences, places of work, at events or on the roads. Kidnapping for ransom was perpetrated by various criminal gangs, sometimes in connivance with some Fulani groups who understand the bushes and forests surrounding the communities. Victims of kidnapping for ransom were usually released after payment of negotiated ransom. But there were instances where victims were killed even after collecting ransom⁶¹, perhaps due to accidental deaths, misunderstanding between the kidnapers and the victims or negotiators, delays in payment of ransom, fear of being that the victims

may have gained sensitive information about the group while in captivity that could lead to their exposure or other unknown reasons. Kidnapping for rituals was carried out by criminals, some of whom were popularly known as "Yahoo Boys". This group kidnap their victims with the aim of harvesting human parts for ritual purposes or illegal organ sales. Young girls are usually victims of this kind of kidnap. Kidnapping was also perpetrated by some self-acclaimed secessionist agitators who target community leaders and traditional rulers who do not cooperate with them.

In the South West, kidnapping mainly took the form of kidnapping for ransom and rituals. In the South-South, the kidnapping of expatriates, as well as cult activities, contribute to the incidence of kidnapping in the region. In the North East, the Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP) insurgents still engaged in the kidnapping of women and girls as well as kidnapping young men as part of recruitment strategies.

Fig. 11: Kidnap Victims: Most Affected States
January 2024 - December 2024

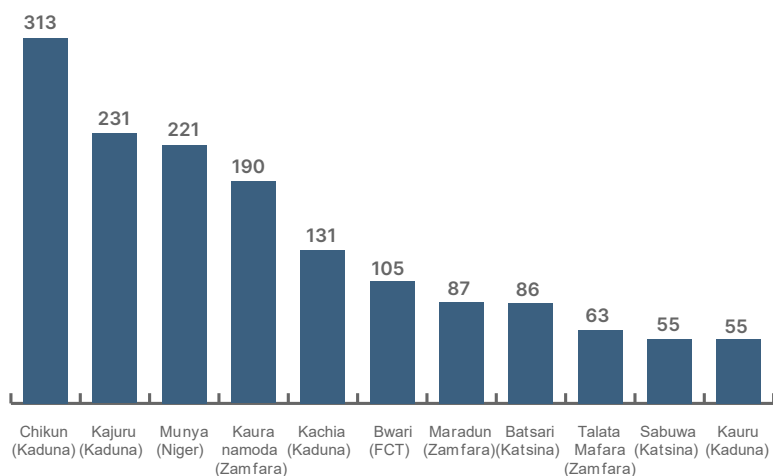


A state-by-state analysis of Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database showed that Kaduna State had the highest number (793) of kidnap victims. Kaduna State alone accounted for 32.3% of the total kidnap victims recorded across Nigeria in 2024. This is followed by Zamfara (421), Niger (296), Katsina (267) and FCT (116). Other states

among the top 10 states but with number of kidnap victims below 100 were Benue (97), Kogi (68), Plateau (43), Anambra (36), and Ondo (29) (see Fig. 11). The high incidence of kidnapping in states like Kaduna, Zamfara, Niger and Katsina with high rates of banditry suggests a strong connection between banditry and kidnapping.

⁶¹ Monye, E. (January 18, 2024). Why Nigeria's controversial Naira redesign policy hasn't met its objectives. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/01/why-nigerias-controversial-naira-redesign-policy-hasnt-met-its-objectives?lang=en>

Fig. 12: Kidnap Victims: Most Affected LGAs
January 2024 - December 2024

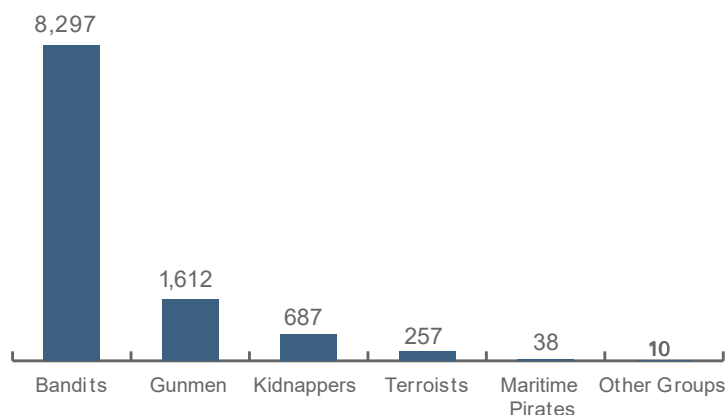


Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

At the local government level, Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database showed that almost all the most affected local government areas (LGAs) are within the North West and North Central States, particularly Kaduna, Niger, Zamfara and Katsina (see Fig. 12). Much of the most affected LGAs are located in the state boundaries and share borders with some other LGAs also affected by kidnapping.

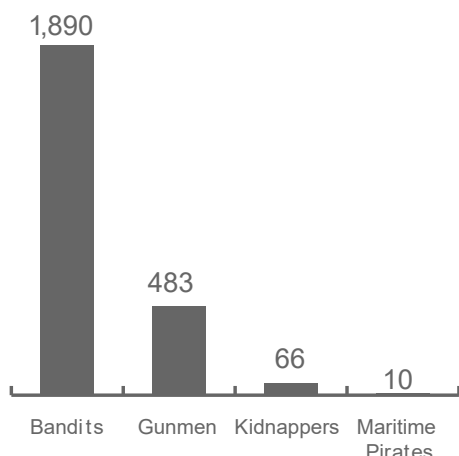
Hence, there appears to be a belt of kidnapping that runs across the North West states through the LGAs located at the boundaries of the states. For instance, Chikun - the most affected LGA with 313 reported kidnap victims – shares a boundary with Niger State, where it connects with Munya LGA, which is one of the 10 LGAs most affected by kidnapping in the country.

Fig. 13: Kidnap Victims: Key Actors
June 2020 - December 2024



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database, 2024

Fig. 14: Kidnap Victims: Key Actors
January 2024 - December 2024



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

Data from the Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database showed that the key actors that perpetrated kidnapping in Nigeria between 2020 and 2024 were bandits, gunmen, kidnappers, terrorists, maritime pirates and other violent groups (see Fig. 13 and 14). Between 2020 and 2024, bandits accounted for 8,279 or 76.1% of the total kidnap victims in Nigeria. Similarly, in 2024 alone, bandits accounted for 1890 or 77.1% of the total kidnap victims recorded in the country. The dominance of bandits as key actors involved in kidnapping further explains the high incidence of kidnapping in North West Nigeria, where the activities of bandits are concentrated. It further suggests that kidnapping is a major strategy adopted by bandits to sustain and expand their activities.

Generally, kidnapping has been on the rise in Nigeria since 2020. However, from 2023, there was a significant decrease in the total number of

kidnapped victims recorded in the country and across all six regions except the North East. While the regions (North East, South-South and South West) continued to experience a decrease in number of kidnap victims in 2024, others (North Central, North West and South East) experienced an increase. The prevalence in the North West and North Central is connected to the activities of bandits in the regions. Moreover, there is now a 'Belt of Kidnapping' that runs across the North West and North Central, made up of LGAs along the borders of the states, which connect each other at the state borders and enable easy movement and expansion of kidnappers from one state to the other. These LGAs in the 'Belt of Kidnapping' account for the highest number of kidnap victims in the region. For instance, Chikun - the most affected LGA with 313 reported kidnap victims – shares a boundary with Munya LGA in Niger State which is also one of the 10 LGAs most affected by kidnapping in the country.

ii. State responses to kidnapping

Governments at national and subnational levels have responded to the menace of kidnapping in various ways. Together, government responses are classified into policy and administrative responses, security and military responses, peace settlements, and judicial and legislative responses.

a. State policy and administrative responses

- No ransom policy: to address the rising incidence of kidnapping for ransom, the Nigerian Senate passed the Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2013 Amendment Bill 2022 in order to prohibit the payment of ransom to kidnappers in Nigeria.⁶²
- However, the no-ransom policy remained ineffective for a number of reasons. First, it is

difficult to ascertain who has paid ransom because many kidnappings and the negotiations that follow happen unreported. Moreover, the Act didn't address the drivers of kidnapping because ransom payment is not the sole reason for kidnapping.

- Labelling bandits as terrorists: The Nigerian government in 2021 formerly declared bandits operating in any part of Nigeria, including the North West and North Central, as terrorist groups. The aim of labelling bandits terrorist groups was, amongst others, to enable the government to apply maximum military force against the group. Again, this response did not end the kidnapping activities of the bandits and terror groups operating across Nigeria, particularly in the North West and North Central.
- Cutting off telecommunication services in selected states: The Nigerian government cut off mobile networks in selected states in order to curtail the activities of groups involved in kidnapping by limiting their access to communication networks.
- Schools closure and Safe School Initiative (SSI): In order to reduce attacks on schools and the kidnapping of school children, at some points, some state governments ordered the closure of schools considered to be at high risk of attack by armed groups. For instance, following the mass abduction of students by armed groups at Bethel Baptist Secondary School at Kajuma in Chikun Local Government Area of the State in 2021, the Kaduna State government ordered the closure of 13 schools it considered vulnerable to bandits attacks⁶³. The Safe School Initiative was also launched to protect Nigerian children in schools from kidnapping and hostage-taking by armed groups.

b. Security and military responses

- Military deployment and aerial bombardment: the federal government deployed military personnel in various locations, including communities and highways, with a high risk of kidnapping. In addition to mounting military checkpoints in high-risk areas, there has also been aerial

warfare in various hideouts of groups involved in kidnapping. In addition to carrying out strategic military operations like Operation HADARIN DAJI in the North West, the military established the Quick Response Wing (QRW) to ensure the round-the-clock presence of the military in vulnerable communities of the North West most affected by activities of the bandits⁶⁴.

- However, while the military deployment and aerial bombardment yielded results, it did not drastically reduce kidnapping across the country because of factors such as weak intelligence gathering and poor civil-military relations. The reported cases of accidental bombardment of the civilian population could also be connected to the issue of weak intelligence gathering on the part of the military.
- Establishment and strengthening local police/vigilantes: States and communities responded to kidnapping by establishing local vigilantes and strengthening the existing ones in order to support the federal security agencies. In the South West, state governments continued to support the Amotekun in bolstering their activities. In the South East, the vigilantes continued to receive support from state governments and communities to fight kidnappers.

⁶² Ogunnbi, O. & Idowu, D. L. (). Kidnapping for ransom (K4R) and the challenges of Nigeria's international image. In: J. S. Omotola & S. Oyewole (Eds.). *The Political Economy of Kidnapping and Insecurity in Nigeria: Beyond News and Rumours* (pp. 245-263). Switzerland: Springer Nature

iii. Emerging situations and projections for kidnapping in 2025

The key factors that will shape kidnapping in Nigeria in 2025 are:

a. Increased budgetary allocation to defence and security

Defence and security received top priority in the proposed 2025 budget with a total allocation of 4.91 trillion naira. This increased allocation will ensure sustained military deployment and aerial bombardment of bandits and other kidnapping gangs. Increased funding of the security sector has the potential to reduce the incidence of kidnapping, particularly in the North West and Central. Hence, if the proposed allocation is approved and implemented, judicious utilisation of allocation to procure military hardware and boost the morale of troops will likely lead to a reduction in kidnappings in Nigeria.

b. Establishment and reinvigoration of State Security Trust Funds

The establishment of new State Security Trust Funds (SSTFs) and resuscitation of existing ones by some state governments will enable state governments to support security agencies operating in the states, including the local vigilantes. Lagos State is the first to establish a State Security Trust Fund in Nigeria. Some other states have followed the same path in recent times. In October 2024, Governor Peter Mbah of Enugu State launched the 20 billion naira Enugu SSTF. Earlier in the year, Governor Alex Otti of Abia State approved the constitution of the State.⁶⁶ The activation of SSTFs by states will increase security provisioning, especially in the area of fighting kidnappers.

c. Increase in volume of cash in circulation

In November 2024, the total currency in circulation in Nigeria reached N4.8 trillion.⁶⁷ Nigeria depends on cash, especially with the dominance of the informal sector, which accounts for 65 per cent of the country's GDP, 93 per cent of employment, and 90 per cent of transactions in the informal economy are in cash. The large volume of cash in circulation will continue to make ransom payment easy and will sustain the strategy of kidnappers involved in kidnapping for ransom.

⁶³ Onireti, A. (2022). Why Nigerian kidnap law banning families from paying ransoms may do more harm than good. *The Conversation*. Available online at: <https://theconversation.com/why-nigerian-kidnap-law-banning-families-from-paying-ransoms-may-do-more-harm-than-good-189427>

⁶⁴ Maishanu, A. A. (2021). Full list: Banditry: Kaduna govt. closes 13 vulnerable schools. *Premium Times Newspaper*. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/nwest/471887-full-list-banditry-kaduna-govt-closes-13-vulnerable-schools.html>

⁶⁵ Kilete, M. (September 17, 2024). Banditry: NAF to deploy quick response wing to northwest. *The Sun Newspaper*.

⁶⁶ Anka, Y. (October 16, 2020). Zamfara govt. secures release of 8 kidnap victims through negotiations. *HumAngle*. Available online at: <https://humanglemedia.com/zamfara-govt-secures-release-of-8-kidnap-victims-through-negotiations/>

d. Growth of digital currencies

There has been growth in the use of digital currencies in Nigeria. By 2020, cryptocurrency transaction volume in Nigeria had reached \$400M. In terms of cryptocurrency trading volume, Nigeria ranks third after the United States and Russia, according to 2020 estimates⁶⁸. The government's regulation of

cryptocurrency in Nigeria has been inconsistent. In February 2021, the Central Bank banned financial institutions from engaging in these transactions. In May 2022, the Nigerian Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) released a framework for the regulation of cryptocurrency. In May 2024, the Central Bank banned person-to-person cryptocurrency trading in naira⁶⁹. Yet, a number of Nigerians still trade in cryptocurrency. This trend may likely continue in 2025 and may serve as a channel for some sophisticated kidnappers to receive payments for ransom.

e. Resilience of armed gangs in the South East

Various armed gangs have emerged under the guise of separatist agitators. Some of these gangs, operating under the name of "Unknown Gunmen", have acquired weapons from various attacks on state security agencies and vigilantes. The gangs also raise funds by levying communities and families

who want to carry out events like burial, especially in border towns like Ihiala in Anambra State. Some of the armed gangs work together with traditional medicine men to conduct protection rituals for them. The activities of these gangs will likely see an increase in kidnapping for ransom and kidnapping for rituals in the South East.

f. Unprotected/vulnerable schools

The existence of poorly secured schools in rural areas across Nigeria still puts school pupils at risk of being kidnapped by armed groups. Armed groups may continue to exploit the existence of vulnerable schools to abduct students from their hostels and demand payment of ransom.

⁶⁷ Okoli, R. C. & Nwokolo, N. (2024). Accelerating state security trust funds for addressing insecurity in the Southeast. NexttierSPD Policy Weekly. Volume 11, Issue 1 November 18th - November 25th, 2024

⁶⁸ Economic Confidential (December 31, 2024). Currency in circulation hits N4.8trn amidst cash crunch. Available online at: <https://economicconfidential.com/2024/12/currency-circulation/#:~:text=The%20total%20currency%20in%20circulation,in%20the%20month%20of%20October>



Farmer-Herder Conflict

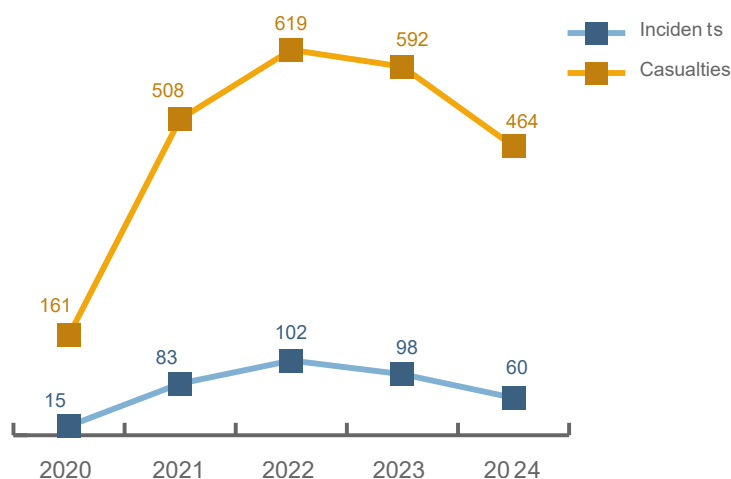
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i. General trend of farmer-herder conflicts

Farmer-herder conflict has remained a major source of insecurity in Nigeria, particularly in the North Central and North West regions where it is more pronounced. At least 2,347 casualties were recorded in 359 violent incidents involving farmers and herders across Nigeria between 2020 and 2024. Data from Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database showed that there was a steady rise in the number of casualties and violent incidents between farmers and herders from 2020 to 2022, but there has been a decline from 2023 as the

number of incidents declined from 102 in 2022 to 98 in 2023 and 61 in 2024 (see fig. 15). Similarly, the number of casualties resulting from farmer-herder conflict declined from 619 in 2022 to 592 in 2023 and 464 in 2024. Meanwhile, the lethality⁷⁰ of farmer-herder conflict decreased from an average of 10 casualties per incident in 2020 to an average of 6 casualties between 2021 and 2023, but the trend changed in 2024 when the average casualty increased to 7.6 (see fig. 16).

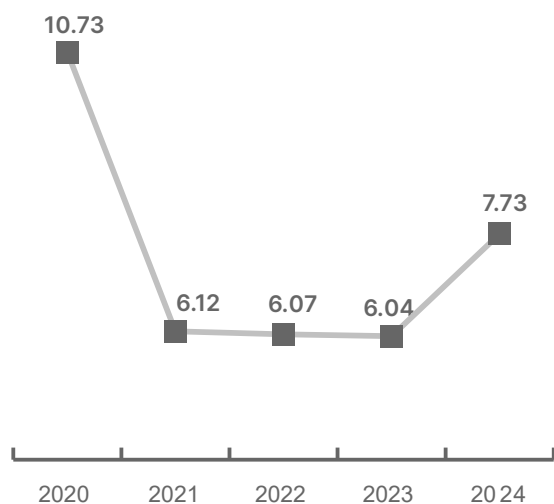
Fig. 15: Farmer-Herder Conflict: Total Annual Incidents and Casualties in Nigeria, 2020 - 2024



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

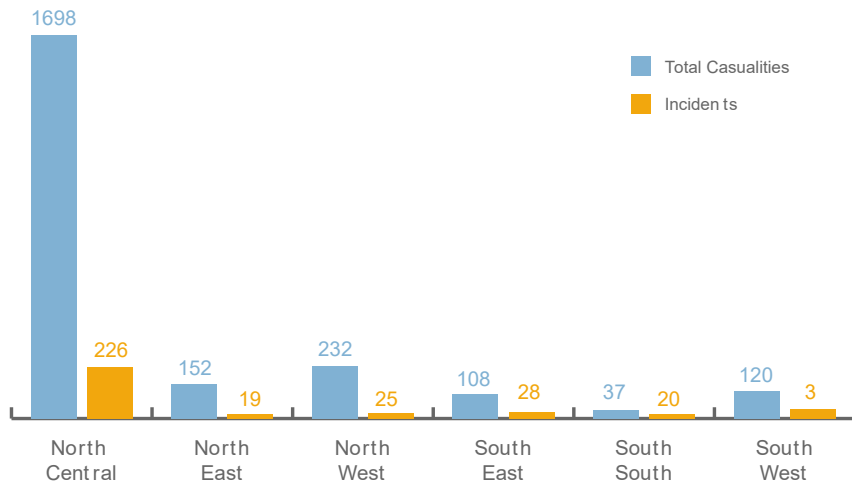
A regional analysis of the farmer-herder conflict for the period of June 2020 – December 2024 showed that North Central was the region most impacted. The region accounted for 226 or 62.9% of the total casualties and 1,698 or 72.3% of the total casualties recorded from farmer-herder violent incidents and recorded in farmer-herder conflict across the country between June 2020 – December 2024 (see Fig. 17).

Fig. 16: Farmer-Herder Conflict: Lethality of Attacks (Average Casualty Per Incident), 2020 - 2024



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

Fig. 17: Farmer-Herder Conflicts: Incidents and Casualties Across Regions, 2020 - 2024

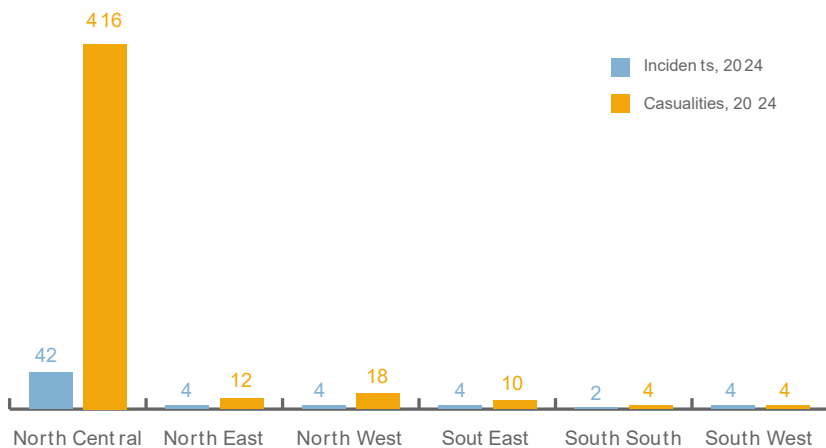


Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

In the year 2024 alone, Nigeria recorded a total of 467 casualties in 61 violent incidents involving farmers and herders (see Fig. 18). The North Central topped the chart with 416 or 89.1% of the total casualties and 42 or 68.9% of the total violent incidents involving farmers and herders. The North West followed with 18 of the total casualties and 4 of the total violent incidents involving farmers and herders. In terms of the lethality of the farmer-herder conflict, North

Central topped the chart with an average of 9.9 casualties per incident in 2024, which is higher than the national average of 7.6 casualties per incident recorded in the same period. This means that the incidents of violent conflict between farmers and herders are not only high in the North Central but also very lethal, with a high number of casualties in each incident, more than what is observed in other regions (see Fig. 19).

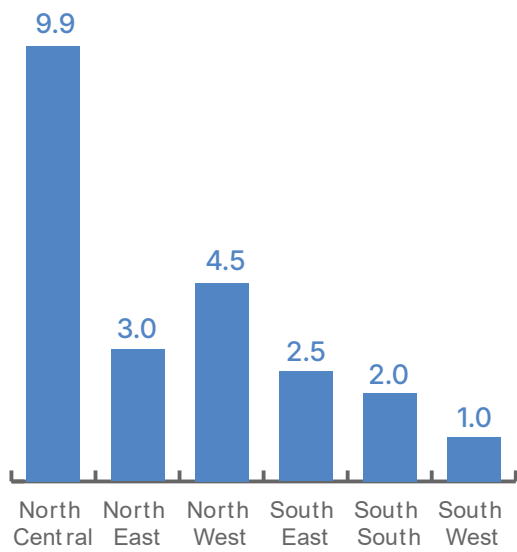
Fig. 18: Farmer-Herder Conflict: Incidents and Casualties Across Regions in 2024



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

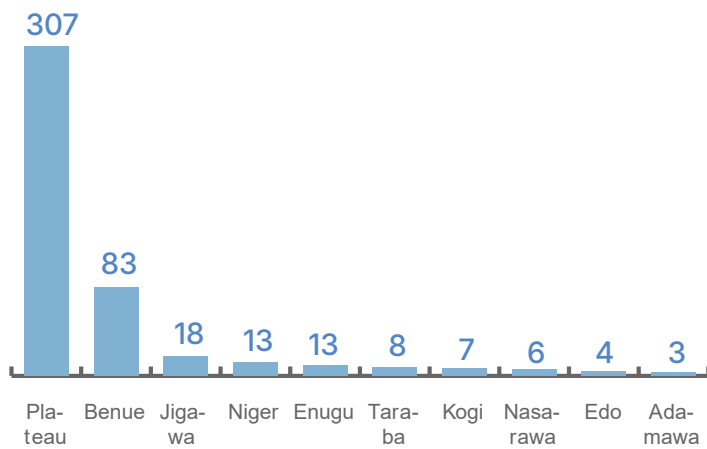
State-level analysis showed that 10 states accounted for over 90% of the total casualties arising from farmer-herder conflict in 2024. Plateau alone accounted for 307 (65.7%) of the total casualties in 2024. Benue followed with 83 (17.7%) casualties (see Fig. 20). This means that within the North Central region, much of the farmer-herder conflict took place in Plateau and Benue states.

Fig. 19: Lethality (Average casualty per incident) Across Regions in 2024



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

Fig. 20: Farmer-Herder Conflict Casualties: Top 10 States, in 2024



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

The violent conflict between farmers and herders is driven by various factors. Climate change, population expansion and lack of secured land tenure for the herders are part of the key drivers of farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria. Droughts and desert encroachment have intensified in Nigeria due to harsh climatic conditions. Climate change, resulting in increasing loss of wetlands and reduction in the amount of water resources and foliage, increased the competition between

herders and farmers over water and grazing lands. This is because the increased southward movement by herders from the Northern parts of the country brought them fierce competition over land and water resources with sedentary farmers in places like Plateau and Benue states. Hence, the concentration of farmer-herder conflict in Plateau and Benue states is connected to the Southward movement of herders in search of foliage and water following the increasing desertification in the

Northern parts of the country.

The lack of secured land tenure for the herders has also compounded the conflict between them and the farmers. In the absence of secured land tenure, attempts by herders to graze on lands cultivated by farmers have always triggered violent clashes between the two groups as the farmers resist encroachments on their farmlands while the herders resort to violence in a bid to

retain access to lands perceived as their grazing lands. Together, climate change and lack of secured land tenure bring farmers and herders into violent conflict over encroachment, crop damage, water pollution, and cattle rustling. These violent attacks and counter-attacks have continued to account for the increasing conflict and associated casualties between farmers and herders in Nigeria, particularly in the North Central.

ii. Government responses to farmer-herder conflict

Both the federal and state governments have responded to the farmer-herder conflict. Together, government responses are classified into policy and administrative responses, security and military responses, peace settlements, and judicial and legislative responses.

a. Policy and administrative responses to farmer-herder conflict

- The existence of poorly secured schools in rural areas across Nigeria still puts school pupils at risk of being kidnapped by armed groups. Armed groups may continue to exploit the existence of vulnerable schools to abduct students from their hostels and demand payment of ransom.
- Restoration of grazing reserves: Various attempts have been made by the federal and state governments to restore existing grazing reserves and/or create new ones. In 2014, the federal government, in an attempt to restore 415 grazing reserves and stock routes designated across the country, created a Committee on Grazing Reserves chaired by then Benue state Governor Gabriel Suswam.⁷¹ However, the recommendations of the Committee were not implemented. In 2021, the federal government approved the recommendations of the committee headed by Prof Ibrahim Gambari, which recommended, amongst others, the review of grazing sites across 25 states in the country to assess encroachment and encroachers, stakeholder engagements and sensitization.⁷² -Various state governments, including Gombe State and Niger State, have also set up committees on recovery of grazing reserves.
- Establishment of Ministry of Livestock: President Bola Tinubu approved the establishment of the Ministry of Livestock Development. This is in addition to the inauguration of the Presidential Committee on Implementing Livestock Reform, which is chaired by the President himself and co-chaired by Prof. Attahiru Jega. The Ministry and the Committee were established to improve the livestock industry as a way of promoting peace among farmers and herders.
- Establishment of Ruga Settlements: The federal government proposed the establishment of the Ruga Settlement Scheme' in all 36 states of the federation. The Ruga Settlement plan was approved by the president in May 2019 to curb open grazing of animals and its attendant security threats to farmers and herders. However, criticisms of the Ruga initiative and its rejection by a wide range of stakeholders in Nigeria caused the federal government to suspend the Ruga initiative.

⁶⁹ BBC (February 28, 2021). Cryptocurrencies: Why Nigeria is a global leader in Bitcoin trade. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-56169917>

⁷⁰ Salami, I. (June 5, 2024). Naira is in crisis but cryptocurrency isn't to blame – Nigeria needs consistent policy. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/naira-is-in-crisis-but-cryptocurrency-isnt-to-blame-nigeria-needs-consistent-policy-230389>

⁷¹ Lethality is measured by average number of casualty per violent incident.

b. Security and military responses

President Muhammadu Buhari ordered the IGP to relocate to Benue to forestall further clashes between herders and farmers.

- Deployment of federal security agencies: The federal government has responded to the farmer-herder conflict by deploying more police and military personnel to locations once there is a clash between farmers and herders. In 2018,
- Establishment of local vigilantes: In addition to the deployment of federal security agencies, various states and communities, particularly those who had come under incessant attacks by herdsmen, set up and mobilised local vigilantes to forestall further attacks.

c. Legislative proscriptions, peace settlements and judicial interventions

initiated in states affected by farmer-herder conflict to promote peace through herder-farmer dialogue. The commissions and projects aimed to facilitate dialogue, conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence between the farmers and the herders in various states.

- Banning and regulation of open grazing: Various state governments have made laws restricting or outright banning open grazing in the states. States like Benue and Taraba were among the first states to introduce laws banning all open grazing.
- Peace projects and peace commissions: Various peace commissions and peace projects were
- Arrest and prosecution of culprits: the government also initiated arrests and prosecution of killer herdsmen and cattle rustlers across the country.
- Introduction of bills on grazing reserves: The National Assembly attempted to pass bills to create grazing reserves across the country. However, all bills were dropped on the grounds that land use was exclusively a state government prerogative.

iii. Emerging trends and projections for farmer-herder conflict in 2025

In 2025, farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria will be shaped by the following factors:

a. Intensification of climate change

The Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index for 2022 ranks Nigeria as the 64th most vulnerable country and the 13th least ready country in the world to adapt to climate change.⁷³ This means that there will be intensification of desertification, drought and

flooding, leading to continuous shrinking of foliage and water resources across the country. It is estimated that 350,000 hectares of land are lost annually to desertification by states like Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Yobe, Borno, Gombe, Adamawa, Plateau, Taraba, Nasarawa, Kaduna, Niger, and Kebbi.⁷⁴ Given this trend in the face of weak adaptation and mitigation strategies, farmers and herders will continue to conflict over shrinking land and water resources in the country.

b. Establishment of Ministry of Livestock Development

The establishment of the Ministry of Livestock Development and the inauguration of the Presidential Committee on Livestock Reforms by President Bola Tinubu will bring about more innovative ways for livestock development in Nigeria. Reforms in livestock development may positively impact the relationship between farmers and herders. The

creation of the Ministry and inauguration of the Presidential Committee on Livestock Reforms has the tendency to douse tension among herders, even if in the short term. This is because such a move by the President gives herders the impression that the President is concerned about their plight.

c. Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

Nigeria is one of the countries in Africa with a large amount of firearms in the hands of civilians. Data from Small Arms Survey showed that there are currently over 6 million firearms in civilian possession in Nigeria.⁷⁵ This, of course, includes the firearms in the hands of both farmers and herders. The implication of this is that clashes between farmers and herders will remain lethal because firearms are easy to access, which will make groups resort to self-help in case of any disagreement.

d. Peace project interventions by development partners

The existence of peace initiatives and projects by both state and non-state actors across the North West and North Central have the potential to reduce farmer-herder conflict if the outputs are sustained. For instance, the Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria (SPRING) programme funded by the United Kingdom (UK) Foreign, Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) promises to engender reduced violence and increased resilience to the pressures of climate change in Northern Nigeria.

⁷³ Notre-Dame Global Adaptation Initiative. Available online at: <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>

⁷⁴ Ogunjobi O. F. (June 24, 2017). As Nigeria joins the world to combat desertification and drought. The Sun Newspaper. Available online at: <https://thesun.ng/as-nigeria-joins-the-world-to-combat-desertification-and-drought/>

⁷⁵ Small Arms Survey (nd). Global Firearms Holdings. Available online at: <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/database/global-firearms-holdings> accessed January 6th, 2025



Political Conflicts



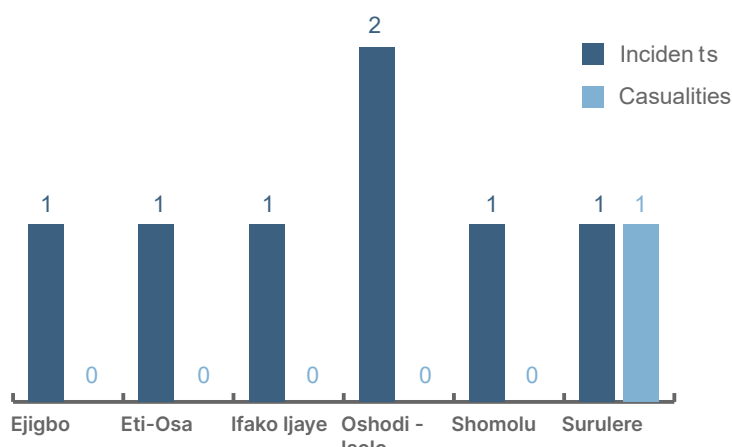
i. The post-2023 elections conflict, politically motivated citizenship and ethnic tensions

In 2024, there was evidence of ethnic tensions between the Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups. The tensions were most pronounced in Lagos State and were connected to the outcome of the 2023 elections. Prior to the 2023 election, there were reported cases of hate speeches and ethnic incitements⁷⁶ which aimed to undermine support for Igbo presidential candidate for the 2023 and Labour Party governorship candidate in Lagos State. Aside from the hate speeches and ethnic incitements, there were reported cases of building/market demolitions by Lagos State, which allegedly targeted Igbo traders in places like Alaba International Market in Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos.⁷⁷ Together, the hate speeches, ethnic incitements and Lagos

State building/market demolitions perceived to be targeted at the Igbos pitted the Igbo ethnic group against their Yoruba counterpart.

During the 2023 elections, the pre-election hate speeches, ethnic incitements, and perceived Igbo-targeted building/market demolitions by the Lagos State government coalesced with the competition over votes of Lagos residents to ignite violent conflicts across Lagos. Persons from the Igbo ethnic group were stereotyped by sponsored political thugs as visitors who should not be allowed to vote in Lagos State. In some voting locations, Igbo voters were intimidated, attacked and disenfranchised when they turned out to cast their votes.⁷⁸

Fig. 21: Violent incident and casualties in Lagos State on Presidential Election Day, 25th February, 2023



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database reported one casualty in a total of 7 violent incidents recorded across Lagos State on the day of the Presidential Election, 25th February 2023 (see fig. 21). During the 2023 Lagos State governorship election, one casualty was recorded in 3 violent incidents across Lagos State by Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database. While there is no evidence that these violent incidents were directly related to the tensions

between Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups, a number of reported incidents on those days showed evidence of persons of Igbo ethnic groups being attacked by thugs at the polling units.

The stereotyping, intimidation and attacks of the Igbo ethnic group experienced in Lagos during the 2023 elections informed the ethnic tensions which continued in Lagos State in 2024, particularly

⁷⁶ Nwosu, B. & Nwokolo, N. (2022). A Cautionary Note on Hate Speech and Violence The Forthcoming 2023 General Elections in Nigeria. NextierSPD Policy Weekly Vol 6 Issue 9 | April 18 - 25, 2022

⁷⁷ Nwosu, B. & Nwokolo, N. (2023). Safety of buildings versus claims of vengeance: Exploring issues around the Alaba market demolitions. NextierSPD Policy Weekly, June, 2023

⁷⁸ Olumayowa, S. (April 24, 2024). "Nigeria's ruling APC used political thugs to suppress Igbo votes in Lagos, rig Sanwo-Olu back to office: U.S. Govt." Peoples Gazette. Available online at: <https://gazettengr.com/nigerias-ruling-apc-used-political-thugs-to-suppress-igbo-votes-in-lagos-rig-sanwo-olu-back-to-office-u-s-govt/>

between the Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups in Lagos State. One manifestation of the ethnic tension was the continued perception of building/market demolitions by the Lagos State government as punishment for Igbos, who were perceived to have voted against President Bola Tinubu and Governor Sanwo Olu of Lagos State. In February 2024, some Igbo groups called on Igbo traders to start relocating from Lagos. This call followed the circulation of an online video of helpless Igbo traders unable to salvage their goods while the Trinity spare parts market in Apapa, Lagos, was being demolished.⁷⁹

ii. Neo-patrimonial or godfather politics and conflicts

In Rivers State, the conflict between the state governor, Siminalayi Fubara and his now estranged political godfather, Nyesom Wike, over the control of Rivers State has raised tension in the state. The conflict between Fubara and Wike may be connected to various violent incidents in Rivers State.

On 29 October 2023, the eve of the impeachment attempt on Governor Fubara, a section of the Rivers House of Assembly Complex was bombed.

In December 2023, the Rivers House of Assembly Complex was demolished on the orders of the state government.

On June 18, 2024, following a statewide broadcast by Governor Fubara directing outgoing LGA council officials to vacate office immediately due to the expiration of their tenure, there was a break out of violence in the state, leading to the death of two persons, including a police operative.

On June 25, 2024, there was an explosion near Hotel Presidential along Aba Road, Port Harcourt, during a protest in solidarity with Mr Wike.

On October 7, 2024, three local government secretariat councils (Ikwerre, Emohua and Eleme) were set ablaze by hoodlums, dissatisfied with the conduct of the local elections.⁸⁰

iii. Policy responses to political conflicts

a. State policy and administrative responses

- Setting up a panel of inquiry: following the violence that followed the LGA elections, Governor Fubara set up a judicial panel of enquiry to investigate the post-election violence and make recommendations for the state government.

b. Security and military responses

- Deployment of security personnel to troubled locations: the state, in response to the violent incidents in both Lagos and Rivers state, deployed the police to troubled scene.

⁷⁹ Onyekwere, K. (December 20, 2024). Ohanaeze reacts as Lagos govt demolishes Igbo-dominated spare parts market in Apapa. The Trumpet Newspaper. <https://thetrumpet.ng/ohanaeze-reacts-as-lagos-govt-demolishes-igbo/>

⁸⁰ Imukudo, S. (October 12, 2024). Chaos and destructions: A timeline of Fubara-Wike dirty political war in Rivers. Premium Times Newspaper. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/744481-chaos-and-destructions-a-timeline-of-fubara-wike-dirty-political-war-in-rivers.html?tztc=1>

c. Peace settlements, judicial and legislative responses

- In the case of the Rivers State conflict, various peace settlements were initiated by political parties and politicians to end the conflict between Wike and Fubara. For instance, President Tinubu held talks with the warring parties in Aso Rock, where they signed an eight-point resolution⁸¹

iv. Emerging trend and projections for political conflicts in Nigeria in 2025

a. Four key factors for political conflicts in 2025. First is the ongoing ethnic tensions between the Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups. Second is the ongoing godfather conflict in Rivers State. Third is information dislocation and hate speech. Fourth is the permutations for the 2027 general elections and a number of off-cycle elections across the country. The permutations for the 2027 general elections will reinforce other factors.

- Increased ethnic tension in Lagos State: The ongoing ethnic tensions between the Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups may intensify in 2025 as fault lines between the two groups will continue to exacerbate if Lagos State continues to carry out targeted building/market demolitions perceived as systematic attempts to punish the Igbo ethnic group in Lagos for their perceived pattern of voting during the 2023 elections.
- Godfather conflict in Rivers State: The ongoing godfather conflict in Rivers State will intensify

with more political heavy weights in the state taking sides with either Governor Fubara or Wike.

- The use of fake news, misinformation and hate speech targeted at certain politicians will continue to heat up the polity in 2025. Already, social media is awash with paid influencers who deploy hate speech to undermine political opponents of their paymasters and also target specific ethnic groups.
- Preparation for 2027 General Elections: In preparation for the 2027 general elections, states like Kano, Lagos and Rivers, with high voting populations, may experience more intense political conflicts as political actors strategies to win or at least get a large chunk of votes from such states. States previously lost by the ruling APC, particularly those won by the Labour Party in the 2023 presidential election, may also experience intense pressures from the ruling APC.

b. Anambra 2025 Off-cycle Election: Anambra State will also experience intense political conflict in 2025, given that the state is slated for an off-cycle election, which will be held in November 2025. Governor Chukwuma Soludo may be seeking re-election for a second term in office. However, he will face serious competition from the Labour Party given that Peter Obi is from Anambra State and is already having a lot of influence over voters. Soludo's

fallout with Peter Obi over his public criticism of him during the 2023 general elections has pitted him against many supporters of Obi, including those who are residents of Anambra State. The 2025 off-cycle election in Anambra State, therefore, promises to be a tough battle for both Governor Soludo in his bid for second tenure and Peter Obi, who would want to prove that he has political influence in his state.

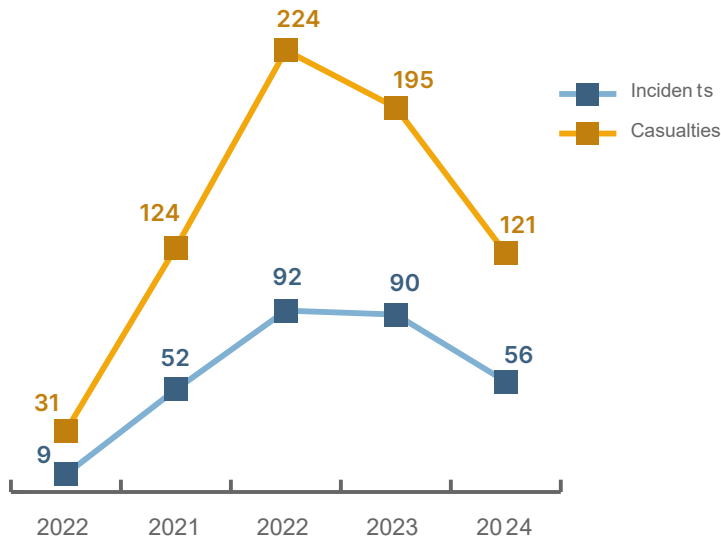


Other Sources of Violent Incidents

i. General trend on other sources of violence

a. Cult clashes

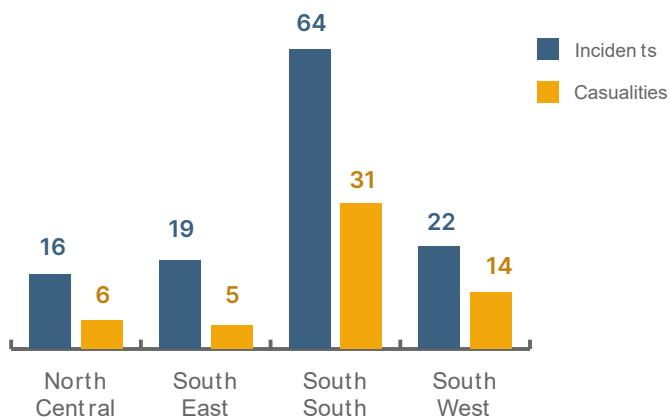
Fig. 22: Cult Clashes In Nigeria: Incidents & Casualties, 2020-2024



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

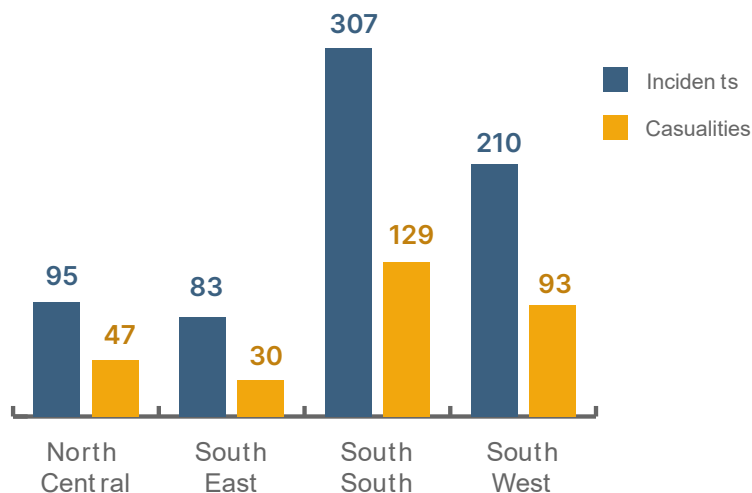
Cult clashes remain one of the most deadly violent conflicts in Nigeria. Between June 2020 and December 2024, a total of 2988 incidents of cult clashes resulting in 695 casualties were recorded across Nigeria. Data from Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database showed that the incidents of cult clashes and related casualties rose continuously from 2020 and peaked in 2022, reaching 224 casualties in 92 cult clash incidents. However, both the number of incidents and casualties declined steadily from 2023 to 2024 (see Fig. 22).

Fig. 23: Cult Clashes: Regional Spread of Incident and Casualties, 2024



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

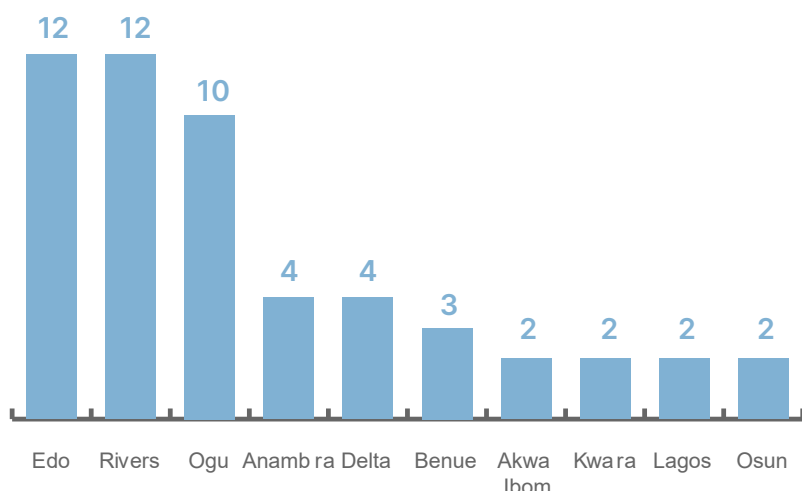
Fig. 24: Cult Clashes: Regional Spread of Incident and Casualties, 2020 - 2024



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

In 2024 alone, 121 casualties were recorded in 56 cult clash incidents across Nigeria. Regional analysis of the data showed that much of the cult clashes in Nigeria occur in the southern part of the country, with few occurring in the North Central region. The South-South region recorded the highest number of cult clash incidents and casualties, accounting for 31 of the total cult clash incidents and 64 of the total casualties across the country. The South West followed with 14 incidents and 22 casualties. South East came third in rank with five incidents and 19 casualties (see Figs. 23 and 24).

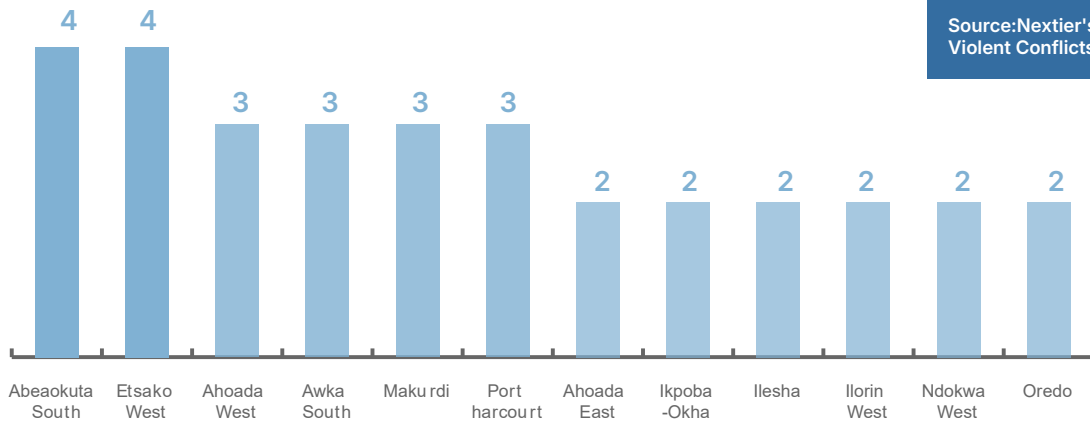
Fig. 25: Incidents of Cult Clashes: Most Affected States in 2024



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

At the state level, Edo and Rivers states were the most affected states, with 12 recorded cult clash incidents each, making them the states with the highest number of cult clash incidents in 2024. Ogun state followed closely with ten recorded cult clash incidents respectively. Anambra and Delta states ranked 4th with four recorded cult clash incidents each in 2024 (see fig. 25). The most affected LGAs in terms of cult clash incidents were Abeokuta South, Etsako West, Ahoada West, Awka South, Makurdi and Portharcourt. Others were Ahoada East, Ahoada West, Ikpoba-Okha, Ilesha, Ilorin West, Ilesha, Ilorin West and Oredo (see Fig 26.).

Fig. 26: Incidents of Cult Clashes: Most Affected LGAs in 2024

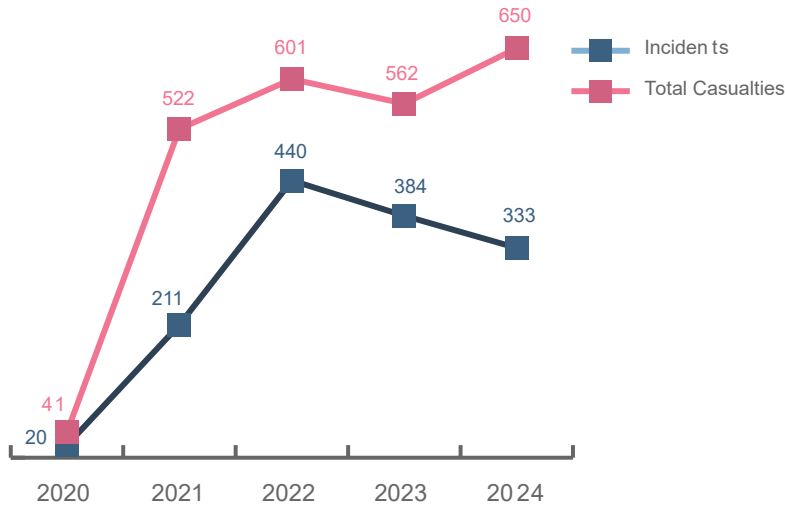


Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

The key driver of cult clashes in Nigeria is the struggle for supremacy over territories, which ignites attacks and reprisal attacks among the cult groups. There are indications that some cult groups are involved in the collection of revenue from motorists and tricycle riders at the parks and markets.⁸² Cult groups are also involved in various criminal activities such as drug trafficking, cybercrime and money laundering⁸³. Disagreements over control of markets and parks, as well as other illicit activities, usually trigger attacks and reprisals among the cult groups. The cult groups do not only kill rival cult members; they also attack and kill security personnel and vigilantes.⁸⁴

b. Cult Gunmen attacks

Fig. 27: Gunmen Attacks In Nigeria: Incidents & Casualties, 2020-2024



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

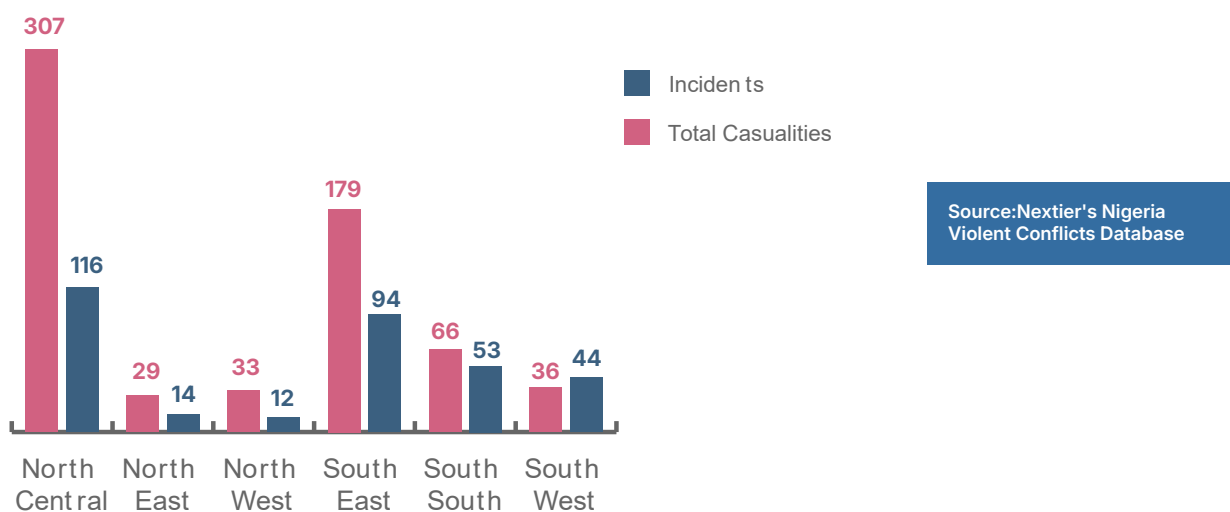
⁸² Okoli, A. Ujumadu, V., Alaribe, U., Oko, S., Adonu, C., Alozie, C., Nwaiwu, C. & Okonkwo, N. (May 22, 2024). Cult activities consuming South-East communities – Residents. Vanguard Newspaper. Available online at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2024/05/cult-activities-consuming-south-east-communities-residents/>

⁸³ Northcott, C. (August 24, 2024). World's police in technological arms race with Nigerian mafia. BBC Africa Eye. Available online at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c984w8jr1glo>

⁸⁴ Nigeria Watch (2023). Thirteenth report on violence in Nigeria 2023.

Between June 2020 and December 2024, Nigeria recorded a total of 1,388 incidents of gunmen attacks, resulting in 2376 casualties across the country. Data on gunmen attacks for the period showed that the number of incidents and casualties rose steadily from 2020 and peaked in 2022 but started to decrease in 2023. Even though the number of incidents maintained the decrease in 2024, the number of casualties recorded in 2024 increased compared to the 2023 figure (see Fig. 27).

Fig. 28: Gunmen Attacks Across Regions in 2024



In 2024, the North Central was the most affected region, accounting for 116 incidents and 307 casualties of gunmen attacks across the country (see Fig. 28). The South East ranked second most affected region, accounting for 94 incidents and 179 casualties. The high number of gunmen attacks recorded in the South East region is connected to the activities of criminal groups popularly known as 'Unknown Gunmen' and self-acclaimed separatist agitators causing mayhem in the region. The North East was the least affected region, with 14 incidents of gunmen attacks and 29 related casualties.

Fig. 29: Incidents of Gunmen Attacks: Most Affected States in 2024

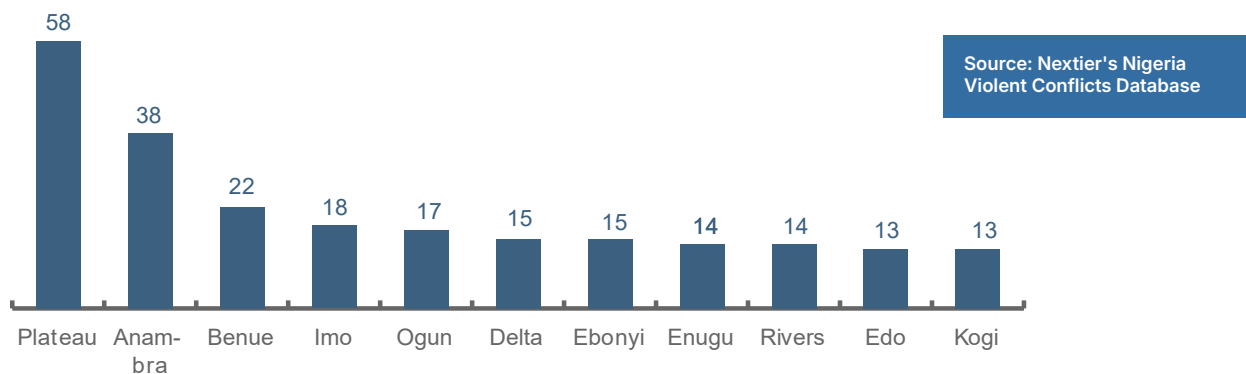
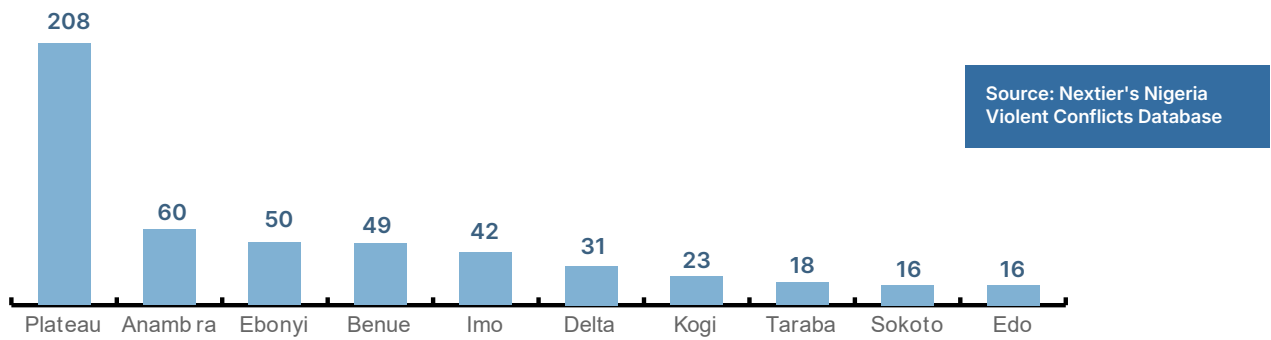


Fig. 30: Casualties from Gunmen Attacks: Most Affected States in 2024

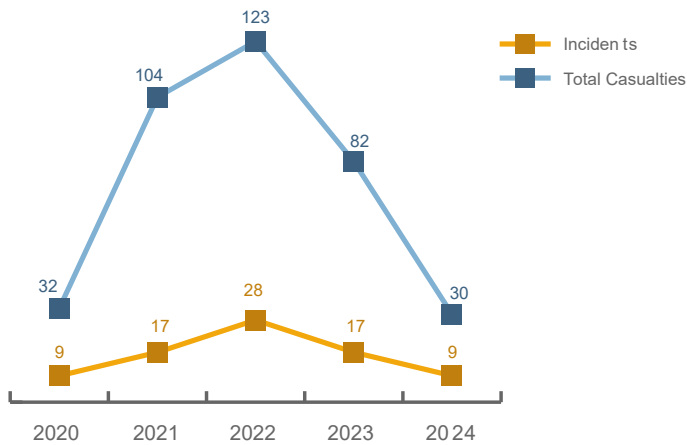


Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

Plateau was the state with the highest number of incidents and casualties of gunmen attacks (see Fig. 29 and 30). The state recorded 58 incidents of gunmen attacks in 2024. The high incidents of gunmen attacks in Plateau State are connected to a combination of attacks by unidentified herders, communal disputes, sectarian violence and other criminal activities. Anambra state was the second state most affected by gunmen attacks in 2024. Again, the activities of unknown gunmen account for the high number of gunmen attacks recorded in Anambra State, where the group has attacked and killed many, including vigilantes⁸⁵. Other states among the most affected by gunmen attack attacks are Benue (22 incidents), Imo (18 incidents), Ogun (17 incidents), Delta (15 incidents), Ebonyi (14 incidents), Rivers (14 incidents), Enugu (14 incidents), Edo (13 incidents) and Kogi (13 incidents).

c. Communal clashes

Fig. 31: Communal Clashes in Nigeria: Incidents & Casualties, 2020-2024

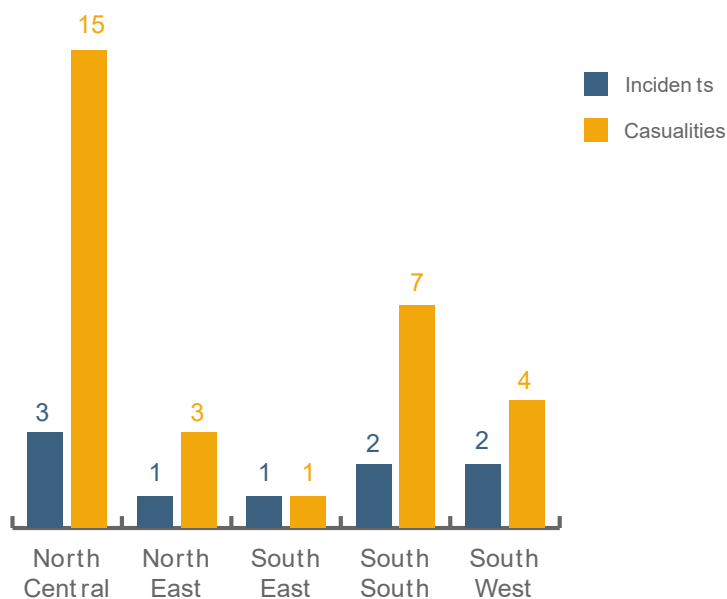


Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

⁸⁵ Okoli R. C. & Nwokolo, N. (2024). Accelerating State Security Trust Funds for Addressing Insecurity in the Southeast. Nextier Policy Weekly, 11(1), November 18th - November 25th, 2024

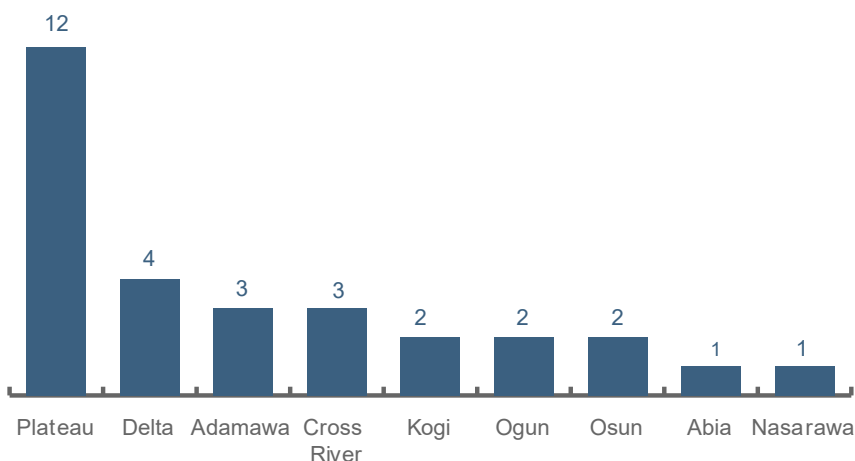
Communal clash is another major violent incident that undermines national security. A total of 80 communal clashes resulting in 371 deaths were recorded across the country between June 2020 and December 2024 (see Fig. 31). However, the data showed a declining trend within the period. The number of communal clashes and associated casualties peaked in 2022 but has maintained a steady decline since 2023. Land dispute has remained a key driver of communal clashes across Nigeria. The significant decrease in the number and associated casualties of communal clashes is connected to activities of peace committees and other peace projects, as well as the deployment of security personnel to some troubled spots.

Fig. 32: Communal Clashes Across Regions in 2024



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

Fig. 33: States Most Affected by Communal Clash in 2024

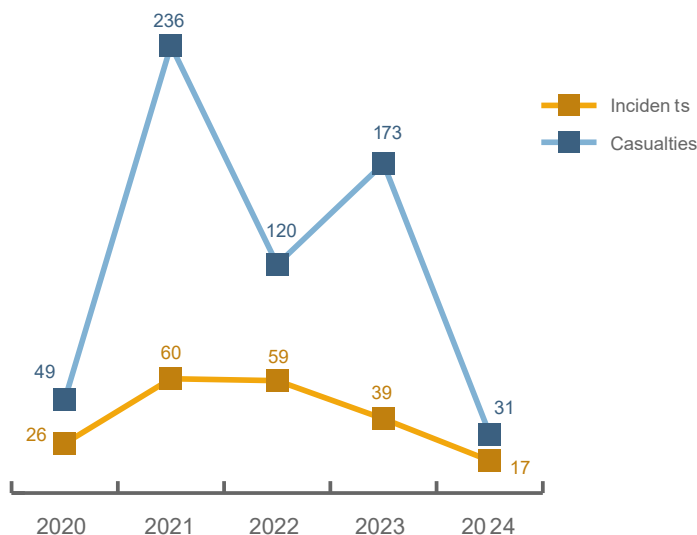


Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

A regional analysis of communal clashes showed that the North Central had the highest number of incidents and casualties (see Fig. 32). The South-South followed with two incidents and seven casualties. South West ranked third with four incidents and seven casualties. No incident of violent communal conflict was recorded in the North East and North West in 2024. With 12 casualties recorded in 2024, Plateau State was the state most affected by communal clashes (see Fig. 33).

d. Extrajudicial killings

Fig. 34: Extra-judicial killings: Incidents and Casualties, 2020 - 2024

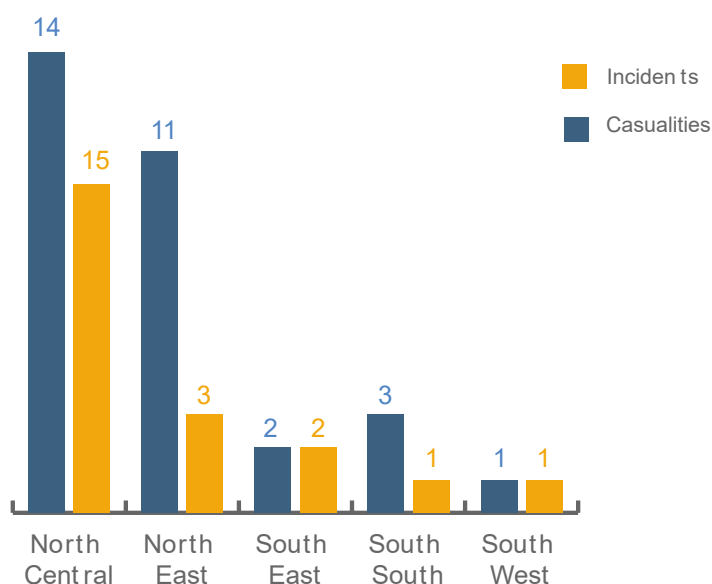


Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

Between June 2020 and December 2024, a total of 609 casualties were recorded in 201 incidents of extra-judicial killings across Nigeria (see Fig. 34). The incidents of extra-judicial killings peaked at 60 in 2021 but decreased steadily from 2022 up to 2024. However, the number of casualties did not follow the same trend. The number of casualties peaked at 236 in 2021, decreased significantly to 120 in 2022 and rose again to 173 in 2023, from where it decreased significantly to 31 in 2024. The reasons for the observed decreasing trend in the incidents of extra-judicial killings are connected to various security reforms and civil society activism against brutality by security forces and other forms of extra-judicial killings in Nigeria.

The key actors involved in extra-judicial killings were state security forces, mobs and vigilantes. There were also instances of extra-judicial killings by civilians and ritualists. State security forces topped the chart, accounting for 92 or 46.2% of incidents and 419 or 69.9% of total casualties arising from extra-judicial killings in Nigeria between 2020 and 2024.

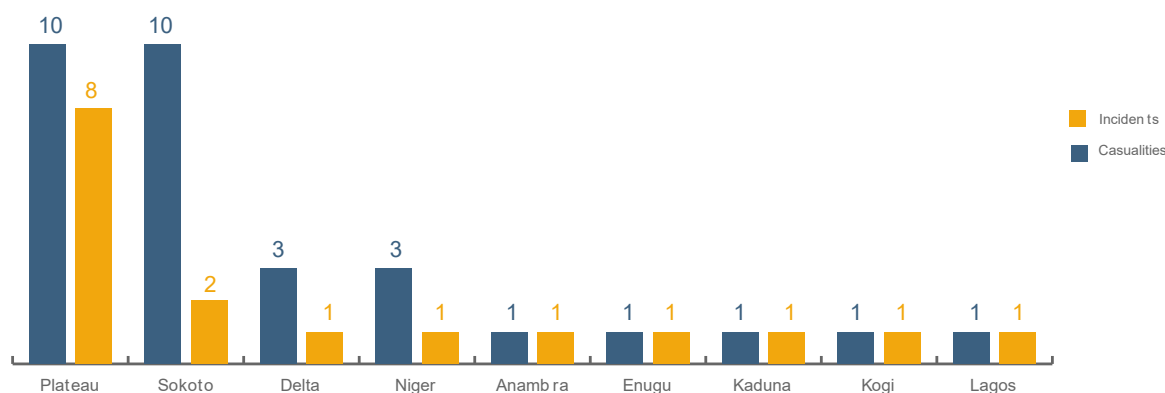
Fig. 35: Extra-Judicial Killings Across Regions in 2024



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

The North Central recorded the highest number of incidents (10) and casualties (14) of extra-judicial killings in 2024 (see Fig. 35). Across the states, Plateau and Sokoto states recorded the highest number of incidents (10 each). Niger and Delta states ranked second, with three incidents each and one recorded casualties each (see Fig. 36).

Fig. 36: States Most Affected by Extrajudicial Killings in 2024



Source: Nextier's Nigeria Violent Conflicts Database

e. (Non) violent protests

Protests have continued to turn violent in Nigeria due to factors such as the infiltration of protesters by thugs and criminals and the use of excessive force by security personnel. At least 24 protesters were killed during the August 2024 protest in Nigeria⁸⁶. The protest organised under the banner of #EndBadGovernance was triggered by rising economic hardship occasioned by economic policies of fuel and energy subsidy removal, liberalisation of the exchange rate, etc.⁸⁷ The protest turned violent when youth engaged in looting, arson, vandalism and acts of insurrection involving the display of flags suspected to be that of Russia during the protest. The security agencies applied brutal force in some of the protest locations, leading to the death and injury of protesters across the country. At least 1,200 protesters were detained, and over 146, including minors, were prosecuted.⁸⁸

ii. Government responses to other sources of violent incidents in Nigeria

a. Policy and administrative responses to other violent incidents

- In cases of extra-judicial killings by security personnel, the suspects were usually arrested, investigated, tried in accordance with the extant rules of the agencies and prosecuted.
- In cases of communal clashes, the government sets up committees or panels of inquiry to investigate and submit recommendations.

⁸⁶ Amnesty International (2024). Nigeria: Police used excessive force to violently quash #Endbadgovernance protests. <https://www.amnesty.org.ng/2024/11/28/nigeria-police-used-excessive-force-to-violently-quash-endbadgovernance-protests/>

⁸⁷ Okoli, R. C. & Nwokolo, N. (2024). Strengthening Youth-Focused Institutions in the Era of Protests. Nextier SPD Policy Weekly, 10(15), August 19th - August 26th, 2024

⁸⁸ Amnesty International (2024). Nigeria: Police used excessive force to violently quash #Endbadgovernance protests. <https://www.amnesty.org.ng/2024/11/28/nigeria-police-used-excessive-force-to-violently-quash->

b. Security and military responses to other violent incidents

- The government deploys security personnel to locations affected by communal clashes, cult clashes, gunmen attacks and (non) violent protests to maintain peace and order. This has led to rights abuses in some instances by some security personnel trying to enforce peace.

c. Judicial, legislative responses and peace settlements to other violent incidents

- Arrest, incarceration and prosecution of suspects. For instance, during the #EndBadGovernance protests, over 1,000 protesters, including minors, were reportedly arrested, detained and prosecuted.⁸⁹
- Initiation of dialogue for a peaceful resolution of conflicts

iii. Emerging trends and projections for other sources of violent incidents in 2025

Communal violence: the increasing intensity of climate change is likely to exacerbate the root drivers of communal conflicts – competition over land and water resources. With weak climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, communal violence may remain a prominent form of conflict, particularly in the North Central region.

Cult clashes: the increase in drug abuse and drug peddling among young people will continue to increase cult clashes. The use of touts for the collection of some revenue in various states like Anambra will continue to lead to cult clashes as groups compete for revenue collection points like parks and markets.

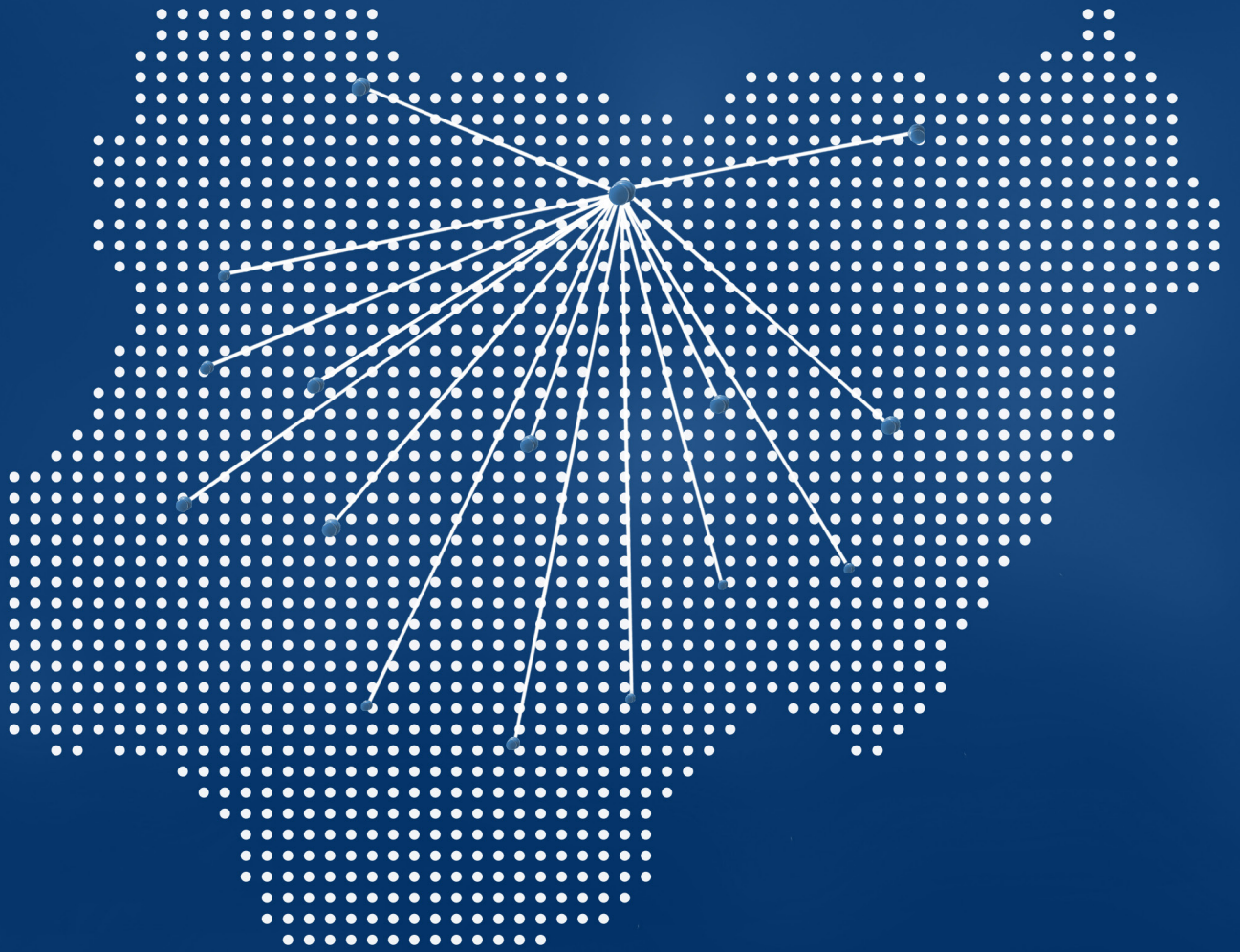
Extra-judicial killings: the continuous dependence of security personnel for settlement of civil conflict may continue to increase the incidence of extra-judicial killings. A lack of trust in the judiciary may continue to drive self-help, leading to extrajudicial killings. A 2021 study found that about 71 per cent of Nigerians lack trust in the judiciary.⁹⁰

(Non) Violent protests: fear of police brutality, as experienced during the #EndSARS protests and #EndBadGovernance protests, may deter protesters from protesting their dissatisfaction with recent government economic reforms such as subsidy removal. Yet, experts argue that such reforms are unlikely to deliver the promised positive effects in 2025⁹¹. Thus, the increasing economic hardship arising from some government reforms are possible trigger of protests if the government fails to devise strategies to cushion economic hardship. The ongoing disenchantment with the proposed tax bills presented to the National Assembly by the Executive may throw up protests, particularly in the North, if the tax bills are passed without adequate consultations and compromises. The feared brutality of state security agencies and the government's dark acts of preventing peaceful protestation persist makes the likelihood of a volcanic form of violent protests very possible.

Gunmen attacks: The proliferation of small arms and light weapons across the country will continue to predispose the country to activities of gunmen attacks in 2025

⁸⁶ Amnesty International (2024). Nigeria: Police used excessive force to violently quash #Endbadgovernance protests. <https://www.amnesty.org.ng/2024/11/28/nigeria-police-used-excessive-force-to-violently-quash-endbadgovernance-protests/>

⁸⁷ Okoli, R. C. & Nwokolo, N. (2024). Strengthening Youth-Focused Institutions in the Era of Protests. Nextier SPD Policy Weekly, 10(15), August 19th - August 26th, 2024



External Factors and Nigeria's Security in 2025

The following external factors that will shape Nigeria's security in 2025



- i. **War in Sudan:** The Sudan civil war has claimed between 20,000 and 150,000 lives and has spread a refugee crisis in the Sahel region. Over 500,000 Sudanese people have been driven to Chad as refugees.⁹² The sudden population increase in places like Chad due to the flow of refugees from Sudan has the potential to create further instability in the already fragile Sahel region and undermine the border security of countries in the Sahel region, including Nigeria. There are reports of a secret supply of weapons to the warring factions in Sudan by various foreign countries, including the United Arab Emirates and Iran.⁹³ The supply of arms in Sudan could turn Sudan into a channel for the spread of arms to various non-state armed groups operating across the Sahel region, including Nigeria.



- ii. **Expansion of terrorist groups across Sahel states:** groups like Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State Sahel Province (IS Sahel) have continued to operate and expand across Sahelian states. As a result of such terrorist groups, the Sahel accounted for over half of all militant Islamist activity on the continent in 2024.⁹⁴ In the first half of 2024, reported fatalities across Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger reached 7,620, which represents a 9% increase compared to the same period in 2023, 37% compared to 2022, and a staggering 190% compared to 2021.⁹⁵ The IS Sahel has expanded its influence to cut across large parts of northwestern Niger's regions extending up to North West Nigeria.⁹⁶



- iii. **Nigeria's closer relations with France amidst rejection by Sahel countries:** Many francophone countries, including Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Chad, have foreclosed their relationship with France, ending long years of France military support to the countries for counter-insurgency operations. In December 2024, France handed over the first military base in Chad as part of its withdrawal from Chad following its expulsion by the former colony.⁹⁷ While francophone countries are severing their relationship with France, Nigeria seems to be strengthening its bilateral relationship with France following President Bola Tinubu's state visit to France in November 2024.⁹⁸ Nigeria's rapprochement with France triggered accusations from Niger that Nigeria is colluding with France to destabilize Niger.⁹⁹ While Nigeria has denied this allegation, Nigeria's rapprochement with France is likely to strain the country's relationship with its immediate neighbours like Niger and other francophone countries. This will not only threaten Nigeria's border security but is likely to reverse gains made through joint counter-insurgency operations between Nigeria and its neighbours like Chad.

⁹² Amnesty International (2024). Nigeria: Police used excessive force to violently quash #Endbadgovernance protests. <https://www.amnesty.org.ng/2024/11/28/nigeria-police-used-excessive-force-to-violently-quash-endbadgovernance-protests/>

⁹³ Okoli, R. C. & Nwokolo, N. (2024). Strengthening Youth-Focused Institutions in the Era of Protests. Nextier SPD Policy Weekly, 10(15), August 19th - August 26th, 2024

⁹⁴ Salau, S. J. (July 04, 2022). 71% of Nigerians lack trust in the judicial system – report. Business Day Newspaper. Available online at: <https://businessday.ng/news/article/71-of-nigerians-lack-trust-in-the-judicial-system-report/>

⁹⁵ Onyeiwu, S. (2024). Nigeria's economy in 2025 doesn't look bright – analyst explains why. The Conversation.

⁹⁶ Okoli, R. C. & Nwokolo, N. (2024). UNGA 79 and the Future of Stability in the Sahel. NextierSPD Policy Weekly. Volume 10, Issue 22 October 21st - October 28th, 2024

⁹⁷ Houreld, K. & Haroun, H. (2024). Sudan's civil war fueled by secret arms shipments from UAE and Iran. The Washington Post. Available online at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/10/15/sudan-war-weapons-uae-iran/>

⁹⁸ Africa Center for Strategic Studies (December 17, 2024). Africa's 2024 Security Trends in 10 Graphics

⁹⁵ ACLED (September 30, 2024). Newly restructured, the Islamic State in the Sahel aims for regional expansion. <https://acleddata.com/2024/09/30/newly-restructured-the-islamic-state-in-the-sahel-aims-for-regional-expansion/>

⁹⁶ ACLED (September 30, 2024). Newly restructured, the Islamic State in the Sahel aims for regional expansion. <https://acleddata.com/2024/09/30/newly-restructured-the-islamic-state-in-the-sahel-aims-for-regional-expansion/>

⁹⁷ Aljazeera (December 26, 2024). France hands over first base in Chad during withdrawal from former colony. Available online at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/26/france-hands-over-first-base-in-chad-amid-withdrawal-from-former-colony>

⁹⁸ Mazumdaru, S. (November 29, 2024). France's Macron hosts Nigeria's Tinubu for talks in Paris. Deutsche Welle. Available online at: <https://www.dw.com/en/frances-macron-hosts-nigerias-tinubu-for-talks-in-paris/a-70913942>

⁹⁹ Akinpelu, Y. (December 27, 2024). Nigeria denies colluding with France to destabilize Niger. BBC News.



iv. Electoral outcomes in Nigeria's neighbouring countries: While military regimes in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea failed to hold elections as previously promised, Nigeria's neighbour, Chad, held elections in 2024. The civilian government in Ghana also held an election in 2024. The acceptance of defeat by Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia further demonstrates the consolidation of democracy in Ghana, Nigeria's close neighbour. The stability in Ghana is a plus for security and stability in West Africa. However, presidential and parliamentary elections held in Chad were highly controversial.¹⁰⁰ The controversial elections in Chad intensified the already existing legitimacy crisis in the country, which will continue to destabilise already fragile Chad. The fragility in Chad will continue to threaten security at Nigeria's borders with Chad, given that rebel groups will likely hibernate in the Lake Chad region and possibly form alliances with insurgents already troubling Nigeria's North East.



v. Russia's increasing influence in Africa: Russia, through its Wagner Group, is spreading misinformation exploiting minerals and supporting counterinsurgency forces across African countries like Central African Republic, Chad and Mali.¹⁰¹¹⁰² Russia is also supporting Mohamed Hamdan 'Hemedti' and his Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in the Sudan war because of Russia's interest in a naval base in Port Sudan¹⁰³. The increasing interference and influence of Russia in the Sahel, particularly its support of military regimes and support for disinformation and misinformation, will contribute to growing instability across the Sahel. Russia's continuing influence.

¹⁰⁰ Noubarasse, B. & Lawal, S. (January 9, 2025). Chad's presidency attacked: Coup attempt, Boko Haram or 'drunk' fighters? Aljazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/9/chads-presidency-attacked-coup-attempt-boko-haram-or-drunk-fighters>

¹⁰¹ Biem, J. & Nwokolo, N. (2024). Navigating Misinformation in the Sahel: Regional Impacts and Nigeria's Stake. NextierSPD Policy Weekly, Volume 10, Issue 23 October 28th - November 4th, 2024.

¹⁰² Campbell-James, J. (2024). Curbing outside intervention in the Sudan War. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Available online at: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/curbing-outside-intervention-sudan-war>



Major Economic Developments and Nigeria's Security Outlook in 2025

a. A major event that impacted Nigeria's economy in 2024 was the sustained increase in the price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) following fuel subsidy removal and floatation of the naira in 2023. The floatation of the naira saw the currency depreciate by over 260%¹⁰⁴. The combined effect of fuel subsidy removal and naira devaluation saw the price of PMS fluctuate between an average of ₦770 per litre in May 2024 (approximately 223.21% increase compared to ₦238.11 per litre recorded in May 2023)¹⁰⁵ and ₦1,030.46 in September 2024 (a 64.55% increase from the September 2023 average of ₦626.21).¹⁰⁶ The rise in the price of PMS contributed to food inflation in the year. Inflation increased from 32.15% in August to 34.6% in November 2024 and is likely to continue in the first quarter of 2025.¹⁰⁷



b. Between 2023 and 2024, Nigeria experienced an exodus of Multinational Companies (MNCs). Within the period, at least five MNCs, including household names in Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) like GlaxoSmithKline Nigeria, Procter & Gamble, Unilever and Sanofi-Aventis Nigeria Limited, decided to exit Nigeria by ending manufacturing operations in the country.¹⁰⁸ Amongst other impacts, this exodus affected the price of many household items, including medical consumables. It also affected direct and indirect employment hitherto provided by those MNCs in Nigeria.



c. Together, the rising inflation in the midst of declining purchasing power worsens the living conditions of many Nigerians. Nigeria's misery index – the sum of unemployment and inflation – rose from 30.5% in quarter 3, 2023, to 36.9% in quarter 1, 2024¹⁰⁹. The increasing misery amongst Nigerians will raise the vulnerability of many to insecurity in 2025.



¹⁰³ Campbell-James, J. (2024). Curbing outside intervention in the Sudan War. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Available online at: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/curbing-outside-intervention-sudan-war>

¹⁰⁴ Financial Nigeria (January 9, 2025). Nigeria nears GDP and inflation rebasing. https://www.financialnigeria.com/nigeria-nears-gdp-and-inflation-rebasing-news-2812.html?fbclid=IwY2xjawHtaXFleHRuA2FibQlxMQABHcHxaH2kDPnGKmiAzrglCSkZ288dhWdkWoNwU6ZP9d7GqmY11mvd3qS-w_aem_Vt412mJUAI6us_GmRvZhug&sfnsn=scwspwa

¹⁰⁵ Nwaokolo, S. (June 20, 2024). Petrol price rises to ₦770/ltr in May 2024 – NBS. Nigerian Tribune. Available online at: <https://tribuneonline.com/petrol-price-rises-to-%E2%82%A6770-ltr-in-may-2024-nbs/>

¹⁰⁶ Proshare (October 18, 2024). NBS releases premium motor spirit (petrol) price watch for September 2024. Available online at: <https://proshare.co/articles/nbs-releases-premium-motor-spirit-petrol-price-watch-for-september-2024?menu=Economy&classification=Read&category=Oil%20%26%20Gas>

¹⁰⁷ Onyeiwu, S. (2024). Nigeria's economy in 2025 doesn't look bright – analyst explains why. The Conversation.

¹⁰⁸ Okoli R. C. & Nwokolo, N. (2024). Explaining Exodus of Multinational Companies from Nigeria: Going Beyond the Single Story. NextierSPD Policy Weekly. Volume 9 Issue 9 | January 1st - January 8th, 2024

¹⁰⁹ Nigerian Economic Summit Group (2024). NESG 2024Q1 unemployment alert. September, 2024

Recommendations



For terrorism

- Continue with kinetic and non-kinetic approaches by equipping the military better providing improved working incentives both in remuneration and working conditions.
- Ensure that improved defence and security spendings reflect on the security sector outcomes. The defence budget should be subject to audit.
- Invest more in the use of intelligence and take steps to curtail intelligence failures that lead to collateral damages.
- Apply intelligence in following through the patterns of mutation of terrorist organisations in order to continue offensives that would finally suppress them. In the same vein, security institutions must monitor and destroy the expansion of the Lakurawa terrorist organisation. This requires penetrating the local base of their operations to obtain the necessary information.
- Newer recruitment into the armed services should take into account the need to extend the presence of the state in un(der)governed territories and prevent the easy planting and nurturing of alternative centres of power, especially ones with extreme ideologies and or terrorist interests.
- The Lakurawa terrorist group was imported by a local community to protect them against bandits from Zamfara State because there was no state presence in the area. The government should focus on enhancing its penetrative and regulative capacity in all parts of its territorial space.

For banditry and illicit mining

- In addition to all the recommendations for terrorism, we also recommend that for banditry, the government should take more than a passing interest in solid mineral mining. The proposed budget for the sector in 2025 is ₦ 9 billion.¹¹⁰ This amount lacks the capacity to meet the level of investment required to stimulate the sector's high potential as a major source of state revenue. So, the government

should prioritise the sector in budgeting.

- Security protection is also largely absent in the sector. Bandits build on this inadequacy to overrun the mining locations and set up their own regime of extraction because the state is largely absent.
- The Federal Government should diligently follow through with its agreement with the United Arab Emirates regarding the requirement of a certificate for the sale of Nigerian gold in their country. In addition, the government should explore other trading outlets for Nigerian gold and set up the same kind of regulatory restriction to limit the rewards of illicit gold mining from Nigeria. The same approach should be used for the control of other solid minerals that attract a lot of interest and crime.
- For Secession, the federal government has done well in setting up the South East Development Commission. It should ensure that the commission is funded for the development of the region. Strategic communication should be part of development projects done by the Commission to convince the people of the region that the government is equitable and inclusive in its value allocation across the geopolitical zones. Besides, more investments that convince the people that the government has not abandoned them should be undertaken so that the perception of marginalization is played. By doing this, secessionist agitation will fail to resonate with the people.
- The government should seriously consider releasing Nnamdi Kanu in order to separate those who agitate for Biafra from bandits. This will help to focus effort more squarely on degrading banditry, kidnapping and other gun crimes in the region.
- Declaring the focus of security in the South East as the elimination of banditry, kidnapping, cultism, and gun crimes would elicit more cooperation.

For piracy and crude oil theft

- Government should maintain its current maritime security governance practices,

¹¹⁰ Solid mineral sector's grossly inadequate budget. (2024, January 14). Solid mineral sector's grossly inadequate budget allocation. Daily Trust. <https://dailytrust.com/solid-mineral-sectors-grossly-inadequate-budget-allocation/>

especially the international cooperation that has supported the impressive progress it has made over the past few years to reduce maritime piracy in Nigeria.

- The powerful patrons of piracy and persons in political authorities that provide business for and offer protection to pirates should be tracked, prosecuted and jailed.
- In addition to the use of pipeline security companies, more sophisticated pipeline security technologies should be explored and deployed.
- A state-of-the-art oil metering system that starts right from the flow station should be deployed. Besides, security cameras should be mounted and watched from a distant console to reinforce direct security forces guarding the pipelines.
- Government should invest in strategic communications about economic sabotage and the environmental and health dangers of illicit refining of oil.
- Severe sanctions to be legislated against security forces that aid and abet oil theft and illicit refining.
- Above all, the government should start addressing the conditions that prompt young people, community leaders and underpaid public servants, including soldiers, police officers and a range of other actors, to engage in oil theft and illicit refining.

For kidnapping

- The federal government should sustain the kinetic approach of deploying security personnel to patrol flashpoints notorious for kidnapping, especially border communities connecting different states. This includes the 'belts of kidnapping' identified in the Northwest by Nextier in this study.
- Security agencies should prioritize intelligence gathering by working with local communities to identify kidnap suspects and dens from where they operate. The security agencies should support and work with families of

kidnap victims while the victims are in captivity and at the time of negotiation in order to gather intelligence. Rescued kidnap victims should be debriefed to obtain relevant information about the strategies of kidnapers.

- Security should be beefed up in vulnerable schools, particularly boarding schools in remote areas. This could be done by ensuring proper fencing and maintaining adequate security presence around the school premises.
- The federal community should adopt early warning and early response mechanisms, which should involve the integration of state-of-the-art technologies, including drones, to track and respond to kidnap incidents.
- Local police architectures, such as vigilantes, should be strengthened through proper funding, equipment, personnel training and motivation. There should also be strong collaboration and information sharing between the vigilantes and federal security agencies.
- As part of long-term measures for addressing kidnapping for ransom, the CBN and related regulatory agencies should place measures to support easy electronic transactions and reduce cash-based transactions. This will make the payment of ransom difficult.

For farmer-herder Conflicts

- The Nigerian government must speed up the implementation of climate change mitigation strategies aimed at curbing drought, desertification and flooding. Both farmers and herders must be empowered with climate change adaptation strategies to curb their violent competition over land and water resources.
- Government at national and sub-national levels should sustain peace dialogues between farmers and herders for easy resolution of conflicts such as trespass and cattle rustling.
- Indiscriminate land sales/allocation by unauthorized persons who extort herders and allocate lands to them for grazing should be punished in accordance with the law.

- The federal government, through the newly created Ministry of Livestock, should devise and support more modern ways of animal production that reduce the current practice of moving cattle over long distances by herders for the purposes of grazing.

For politically motivated conflicts

- The government must demonstrate the political will to identify and punish persons promoting hate speech and fake news, particularly those that aim to politically undermine certain ethnic, religious or political groups.

For other sources of violent incidents

Cultism

- Governments at all levels should ensure that revenue, such as rates/levies, in the markets are collected by state revenue collection agencies. This will ensure that cult groups do not convert markets and parks into their fundraising territories.

Gunmen attacks

- Government should deepen measures to combat the spread of small arms and light weapons across the country.

Communal clashes

- Government should ensure effective border

demarcation among communities with conflicting borders.

- Government should promote dialogue among communities involved in disputes over land and other resources in order to avert resort to violence.

Extrajudicial killings

- The government should sustain regular training of security agency personnel on how to discharge their duties without abusing human rights. Allegations of extrajudicial killings by security personnel should be thoroughly investigated, and offenders prosecuted accordingly.
- There is a need to deepen the fight against corruption in the judiciary in order to enhance the confidence of the masses to settle disputes in the judiciary instead of resorting to self-help.

(Non) Violent protests

- The government should deepen social security measures aimed at ameliorating the effects of neoliberal reforms, such as subsidy removal on the masses.
- The national assembly must carry out wide consultation and ensure that the genuine interests of all stakeholders across the country are reflected in the tax bill before it is passed into law.

Mutations of Terror and Conflicts

2025 Security and Conflict Outlook in Nigeria

February 2025

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