

## **Analysis of the Interplay between Insurgency and State Politics in Nigeria.**

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### **Abstract**

The Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast and the rise of banditry in Northwest Nigeria have posed significant security challenges and eroded the Nigerian state's authority over its territory. Therefore, this paper examines the complex interplay between these phenomena and highlights the impact of governance, economic conditions, ethnic and religious divisions, and the state's role in suppressing insurgency. Grounded in the Frustration-Aggression Theory, this study employs a documentary analysis to identify the root causes of these security threats. The findings suggest that combining security measures with political and socioeconomic reforms is necessary. In addition, a holistic approach is essential to address the challenges of insurgency and banditry to have lasting peace and stability in Nigeria. There is also the need for transparency and accountability in local and state governments, promotion of effective service delivery, enforcement of the rule of law, and inclusiveness in governance. The paper concludes that, if the government in Nigeria faithfully addresses the underlying drivers of insurgency, there is certainty that citizens would enjoy a more stable and secure environment.

**Keywords:** Insurgency; Interplay; Politics; Nigeria; State.

## Introduction

Nigeria, sometimes referred to as the "Giant of Africa" because of its considerable population and economy, is facing severe security issues that have huge repercussions for its socio-political and economic stability. Insurgency distinguishes itself among these difficulties, afflicting several sections of the country and intensifying pre-existing vulnerabilities, so perpetuating a cycle of violence and instability.

The rise of insurgency and banditry in Nigeria has posed significant security challenges for the nation, threatening its stability and sovereignty (Oyediran, 2022). The highly wooded characteristics of the border area have facilitated the transit of bandits and rebel factions, permitting covert ingress and egress from the state. This is especially troublesome in regions already facing considerable security issues. Agbiboa (2020) asserts that the Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria, initiated in 2009, has led to the fatalities of thousands and the relocation of millions. Kwaja (2020) contends that the increase in banditry in the Northwest has resulted in a collapse of law and order, with armed factions instilling fear in communities and hindering economic operations. This and more demonstrates the complex interaction of several causes leading to the emergence of Boko Haram.

The organization originated in 2002 in Borno State, an area characterized by considerable socio-economic difficulties and government deficiencies. The local populace encountered elevated levels of poverty, unemployment, and inadequate access to education and other services, fostering a climate conducive to extreme ideas. Boko Haram skillfully exploited these problems, advancing a narrative that appealed to marginalized populations and presenting itself as a remedy for their discontent. The absence of efficient government and security in the region enabled Boko Haram to position itself as a purported liberating movement. This has further intensified the instability in Borno State and its adjacent regions. The group's assaults have

caused more than 30,000 fatalities and displaced millions, resulting in a significant humanitarian disaster (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

The Northwest, particularly the states of Zamfara, Katsina, and Kaduna, has emerged as a focal point for banditry. Bandit organizations substantially undermine local economies via illegal activities such as livestock rustling, abduction, and armed robbery. These activities engender anxiety within communities and result in financial instability for local farmers and enterprises. The larceny of animals may obliterate a rancher's income, whilst occurrences of abduction foster an atmosphere of fear that dissuades investment and economic development. Moreover, armed robberies intensify the difficulties encountered by these communities, leading to the displacement of people and families who frequently escape in pursuit of safety. The aggregate impact of these offences not only displaces numerous individuals but also erodes the region's social cohesion and general stability. Alemika (2013) asserted that the state's insufficient reaction, frequently hindered by corruption and poor coordination, has intensified the situation, rendering communities vulnerable and cultivating an atmosphere of dread and insecurity. Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016) contend that banditry frequently thrives in regions with limited governmental presence. In certain areas, bandits may function with some impunity, undermining the state's monopoly on violence and law enforcement. An examination of the current research reveals an agreement on the complex nature of Nigeria's security issues. Academics emphasise the importance of inadequate governance and economic distress in creating an environment that promotes violence. Okoli and Iortyer (2014) contend that the Nigerian state's failure to deliver essential services and guarantee equitable resource allocation incites discontent and instability. Falola and Heaton (2008) similarly underscore the historical and socio-cultural aspects of ethnic and religious tensions that frequently incite hostilities. Ethnic and religious conflicts sometimes act as triggers for conflict, since divergent identities and beliefs can result in misunderstandings, grievances, and animosities among communities.

The Boko Haram insurgency and escalating banditry in the Northwest have revealed substantial deficiencies in administration and security (Adewuyi, 2020). This research enhances the comprehension of insurgency by synthesizing the Frustration-Aggression Theory with practical evidence from various states.

## **Case Studies**

### **Boko Haram Insurgency**

Boko Haram, formally designated as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, was established in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria. The group's name means "Western education is forbidden," indicating its strong hostility to Western education and ideals. Boko Haram promotes the creation of an Islamic state regulated by Sharia law, dismissing Western influences and secular administration structures (Campbell & Harwood, 2018). This created tension within the communities and primarily within the government's framework, as the commitments made by various elected officials to the electorate may remain unfulfilled, thereby compelling the government to implement a military response to stabilize the region and neutralize the insurgent group.

The Nigerian government's preliminary military reaction faced criticism for human rights violations and inadequately addressing the socio-economic factors that sparked the insurgency. Recent endeavors have sought to integrate military operations with developmental initiatives, while obstacles persist (Zenn, 2020). Moreover, several analysts have indicated that the military strategy has inadequately addressed the underlying socio-economic challenges, including poverty, unemployment, and insufficient education, which substantially contribute to the continuation of the insurgency. The government's plan, by neglecting these essential components, not only intensified human rights violations but also failed to establish a permanent and comprehensive resolution to the root causes of the conflict. In recent years, Boko Haram has undergone internal schisms, resulting in the formation of a breakaway group

called the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). ISWAP, allegedly prioritizing local support and exhibiting less brutality than Shekau's side, has still persisted in executing attacks and sustaining a substantial presence in the region (Zenn, 2020).

Nigerian and regional military operations have effectively reclaimed certain territory and diminished Boko Haram's operational capabilities. Nonetheless, the organization persists in its resilience, continuing to present a danger via intermittent assaults and sustaining influence in isolated regions (Campbell & Harwood, 2018).

### **Banditry**

Banditry has become a prominent security concern in Nigeria, especially in the Northern region. The activities marked by armed gangs participating in abduction, cattle rustling, and armed robbery, has intensified over the past decade, presenting significant dangers to social stability, economic growth, and human security. In the Northwest, banditry has been associated with resource rivalry, ethnic strife, and the disintegration of conventional conflict resolution methods. The state's failure to ensure security and justice has facilitated the proliferation of bandit gangs (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016). The World Bank (2020) observed that agricultural operations have been significantly hindered by insecurity instigated by bandits. Farmers are unable to cultivate their land or gather produce, resulting in food scarcity and elevated pricing. Research by Okoli and Ugwu (2019) emphasized that cattle rustling, a prevalent practice among bandits, has led to livestock losses, robbing farmers of their principal revenue source and disrupting local meat and dairy supply networks. Communities impacted by banditry have seen increased insecurity, resulting in a deterioration of social cohesiveness and faith in governmental authority (International Crisis Group, 2021). Such actions can destabilize communities, weaken local economies, and diminish faith in governmental agencies responsible for security (Aliyu, 2021). Negotiations with bandit groups have yielded inconsistent outcomes, underscoring the necessity for a more holistic strategy that tackles

fundamental issues including land conflicts and rural impoverishment (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014).

### **Interplay between Insurgency and State Politics**

The complicated interplay among banditry, insurgency, and state politics represents a multilayered phenomenon evident in several global locations. This tendency is especially evident in regions marked by weak or failing states, prolonged war, and a historical legacy of violence. The convergence of these variables engenders a volatile environment wherein non-state actors, like bandits and insurgents, may exploit state fragility and influence local dynamics to advance their objectives. The Nigerian government's approach has repeatedly been condemned as reactive rather than proactive, with military operations generally failing to tackle the underlying causes of these conflicts. The absence of cohesive local government, as frequently noted by residents, coupled with the view that political elites are detached from the challenges faced by regular inhabitants, has exacerbated mistrust in state institutions. This establishes a cyclical dynamic in which banditry and insurgency mutually reinforce one another, eroding initiatives aimed at achieving enduring peace and stability. The Nigerian environment exemplifies the interconnection of banditry and insurgency with state politics, complicating governance and security, and underscoring the necessity for comprehensive solutions that tackle both current threats and underlying socio-political factors.

This phenomenon's complexity requires thorough academic analysis due to its substantial ramifications for understanding conflict, governance, and state-society interactions. The interaction of banditry, insurgency, and state politics is influenced by several elements, including:

#### **Weak Governance:**

This, among other aspects, leads to the interaction between insurgent and state politics. Governance is essential for effective management in both public and commercial sectors, often

focused on sustainable development, sound governance standards, and stakeholder engagement. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines governance as "the exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels" (UNDP, 1997).

Moreover, Hyden (2006) defines Governance as the exercise of power and control within a society, encompassing the provision of public goods and services, the safeguarding of human rights, and the advancement of economic growth. Weak governance denotes the state's incapacity or reluctance to exert power and control over its area and populace efficiently. Ineffective government in Nigeria has substantially fueled the escalation of banditry and insurgency. Despite initiatives like as the Fiscal Responsibility Act, designed to foster responsible public financial management and improve budgeting and expenditure transparency, the government frequently struggles to execute these policies successfully. Consequently, public resources are ineffectively employed, resulting in several persons being disadvantaged. This circumstance highlights the essential significance of good governance in Nigeria, demonstrating how deficiencies in governance and insufficient stakeholder involvement may impede resource management, diminish public trust, and obstruct sustainable development across the nation. Corruption within the government has hindered infrastructure development in sectors such as education, health, and security, resulting in anger and frustration. This has allowed rebel groups and bandits to thrive and function with minimal obstruction, while also rendering recruitment into the cult perceived as a survival strategy by many. Corruption poses a significant concern in Nigeria, which is ranked 146th out of 180 nations in the Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International, 2020).

Combating corruption is crucial to thwarting the emergence of banditry and insurgency. The Nigerian government must implement definitive measures to combat corruption, including fortifying institutions, enhancing openness, and ensuring accountability for those culpable.

### **Economic Factor**

The economic factor suggests that conditions such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality may affect citizen behavior and contribute to the rise of insurgency. It further argues that economic conditions may lead to the formation of insurgency by generating an atmosphere in which individuals think that they possess no option but to turn to violent action. World Bank research identified poverty and unemployment as key determinants of aggressive behavior (World Bank, 2019).

The Nigerian government has instituted multiple initiatives to foster economic growth and diversification; however, the economy remains heavily dependent on oil exports, rendering the country susceptible to global oil price fluctuations, with many citizens also reliant on government services. Nevertheless, a decline in oil prices results in diminished government revenue, thus leading to a reduction in expenditures on social services, infrastructure, and other public services, like healthcare and education.

As reported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Nigeria's adult literacy rate (ages 15 and older) was 59.6% in 2020. A significant number of Nigerians are deprived of decent education and employment prospects, hindering their ability to escape the cycle of poverty.

### **Frustration-Aggression Theory**

The Frustration-Aggression Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the actions of insurgents. This article elucidates the worldview of the rebels and bandits, highlighting their optimistic anticipations regarding government policy. Johnson (2020) posited that when an individual is obstructed from attaining a goal or satisfying a desire, they may encounter dissatisfaction, perhaps resulting in violent behavior. This hypothesis posits that irritation is a requisite yet inadequate condition for aggressiveness, with additional elements, including



cognitive evaluations and social standards, potentially affecting the propensity for violent behavior.

Recent studies, like Hill (2020), have corroborated the Frustration-Aggression Theory, indicating that frustration may incite violent behavior across many circumstances. The research conducted by Johnson (2020) posits that persons who encountered frustration had a higher propensity for violent behavior, including physical violence and verbal aggressiveness. This indicates that rebels and bandits are primarily driven by dissatisfaction arising from the government's inability to fulfill their aspirations.

Nevertheless, the insurgency's efforts have just intensified the issues they want to address. Through the utilization of aggressive and destructive methods, they have established a cycle of violence resulting in extensive suffering and instability. The devastation of essential infrastructure has disproportionately affected the most vulnerable segments of society, including women, children, and the elderly.

The Frustration-Aggression Theory underscores the necessity of addressing the fundamental reasons for dissatisfaction, as the mistaken acts have resulted in catastrophic effects for the local populace, rather than only reacting with fury. The insurgency's efforts have not resolved the fundamental concerns and have, in fact exacerbated difficulties and misery.

### **Discussion of Findings**

This research offers a comprehensive investigation of the intricate links between insurgency and state politics in Nigeria, enhancing the understanding of their interactions. The results indicate that the country's security issues are intrinsically connected to its governance system, economic circumstances, and social frameworks. The principal findings from the research may be encapsulated as follows:

- i. The Nigerian government's failure to produce efficient administration, marked by corruption, inadequate service provision, and a lack of accountability, has fostered a climate ripe for the rise of insurgent.
- ii. Economic Factors: Poverty, unemployment, and inequality have fueled the emergence of insurgent as individuals pursue alternate avenues for survival and sustenance. The research corroborates the Frustration-Aggression Theory, which asserts that dissatisfaction arising from unfulfilled expectations may incite violent behaviour. The Nigerian government's inability to fulfil civilian aspirations has exacerbated the rise of insurgency.

## Conclusion

The Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria and the rise of banditry in the Northwest have posed significant security challenges to the Nigerian state, eroding its authority and control over its territory. Through a documentary analysis of relevant data, this study has examined the complex interplay between these phenomena and state politics, highlighting the impact of governance, economic conditions and the state's role in insurgency.

The findings of this study suggest that the root causes of insurgency in Nigeria are multifaceted and deeply entrenched in the country's socio-economic and political fabric. The Frustration-Aggression Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the motivations and behaviors of individuals who engage in violent extremism and banditry.

Ultimately, this study concludes that a holistic approach is essential to addressing the complex security challenges facing Nigeria. This approach must combine security measures with political and socioeconomic reforms aimed at addressing the underlying drivers of insurgency and banditry. Nigeria can create a more stable and secure environment for its citizens by increasing transparency and accountability in governance, improving service delivery, upholding the rule of law, and addressing security challenges responsively and inclusively.

The study's findings and recommendations have important implications for policymakers, security practitioners, and researchers working on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Nigeria. By prioritizing a comprehensive and inclusive approach to addressing the root causes of insurgency and banditry, Nigeria can break the cycle of violence and instability that has plagued the country for decades.

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