

Exploring Insurgency and its Implication on Nigeria's National Security

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[0171] Abstract

The study explored the concept of insurgency and its impact on Nigeria's national security, arguing that the country faces multiple forms of insurgency that present complex and diverse security challenges. It emphasized that insurgency in Nigeria is not a single, uniform issue but a complicated mix of different groups, each with distinct motivations and goals. Within this framework, the study analyzed the connection between insurgency and national security by focusing on identifiable factors such as Boko Haram, militancy in the Niger Delta, herder-farmer conflicts, and banditry. The Human Security theory was applied to frame the discussion, as it underscores that insurgencies in Nigeria often stem not only from ideological extremism but also from fundamental human insecurities like poverty, economic hardship, governance failures, and environmental concerns. The findings indicated that although Nigeria has employed a multi-pronged approach combining military action, humanitarian assistance, and development programs persistent issues such as poverty, corruption, ineffective governance, and the changing nature of insurgent threats continue to hinder progress, allowing insurgencies to endure. The study recommended a strategic shift away from a mainly reactive and military-focused response toward a proactive and comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes fueling insurgency, while also enhancing security measures through better intelligence, inter-agency cooperation, and building trust within communities.

Keywords: Banditry, Boko Haram, Herdsmen-Farmers clash, Insurgency, National Security and Niger Delta Militancy.

Introduction

Insurgency is a coordinated resistance movement that employs tactics such as subversion, sabotage, and armed conflict to achieve its objectives. Its goal is often to overthrow the current social order and redistribute power within a country. Sometimes, insurgents aim to remove an existing government without necessarily triggering a full social revolution; other times, they seek to create autonomous territories within a state, force the withdrawal of occupying forces, or extract political concessions that cannot be gained through peaceful means. Essentially, insurgency is a rebellion against authority where the participants are not formally recognized as lawful combatants (Hayden, 2015). According to the US Department of Defence (2007), insurgency is an organized effort to topple a constituted government through subversion and armed struggle. Galula (1963) described it as a prolonged, step-by-step struggle to achieve specific intermediate goals ultimately leading to the overthrow of the established order.

In modern contexts, insurgency encompasses a range of conflict forms—from covert subversion to guerrilla warfare, and even the organization of guerrilla units into conventional fighting forces. Johnston (2005) defines it as the deliberate use of violence and subversion aimed at seizing or challenging political control over a region or state. Insurgency represents a political struggle where opposing sides engage in conflict, often termed war, but typically lacks the full structure of a revolution, even though it shares similar ultimate aims. Unlike revolutions, which often involve parts of a country's formal military, insurgencies usually begin in remote rural areas where they gradually build support by gaining the trust

of local populations. Despite their varying forms, most insurgencies share political goals focused on dismantling and reshaping the existing political landscape within their geopolitical environment. Because insurgents usually lack the strength to confront a national army directly, they often resort to tactics such as bombings, kidnappings, hostage-taking, hijackings, and especially the destruction of public infrastructure (Caleb, 2022). The primary aim is to challenge the current government for control over all or part of its territory or to force political power-sharing arrangements.

From a national security perspective, insurgency is a sustained politico-military campaign by non-state actors against a recognized government, occupying power, or established authority. Its main objective is to weaken the legitimacy and control of the ruling power and often to overthrow or significantly alter the political or social order of a state or region. Insurgencies typically involve asymmetric power relations, with insurgents far weaker than state militaries. As a result, they avoid direct large-scale confrontations, relying instead on guerrilla tactics, sabotage, subversion, and propaganda. Insurgency is not solely a military issue but involves a combination of political, ideological, social, economic, and military strategies to meet its goals. Insurgents exploit existing grievances such as economic inequality, ethnic or religious discrimination, injustice, or corruption to gain popular support and legitimacy.

While the ultimate goal is often government overthrow, insurgencies can also pursue more limited aims, including establishing autonomous zones within a state, forcing the exit of occupying forces, or securing political concessions unattainable through peaceful means. Essentially, insurgency is a profound internal threat that challenges the core of a nation-state's security, demanding a broad and multifaceted response beyond mere military action. Security fundamentally means safety freedom from fear, danger, violence, or unrest, all of which cause human anxiety. It involves protection from harm or exposure to threats. Thus, a secure state is one that is largely free from external attacks or internal sabotage (Piate, 2025). Security is a complex concept that encompasses protection measures for people, assets, information, and systems to prevent harm or coercion. It involves creating and maintaining an environment where individuals, organizations, and nations can thrive without fear of loss or injury.

In the context of insurgency, national security entails the comprehensive efforts by a state to safeguard its citizens, territory, institutions, and way of life from internal threats posed by organized armed groups aiming to overthrow or substantially alter the government or social order. Traditionally, national security focused on defending against external military threats, but with insurgency, the main danger arises from within a country's borders. National security's goal here is to protect core state values like sovereignty and territorial integrity. Ultimately, securing a nation against insurgency involves ensuring long-term stability, prosperity, and survival by addressing both immediate violence and underlying grievances. It requires continuous adaptation to evolving threats and the implementation of broad strategies that extend beyond conventional military responses.

Nigeria has been confronting multiple forms of insurgency that pose complex and significant threats to its national security. To fully understand this issue, it is important to analyze the various insurgent groups and the wide-ranging effects of their actions. Insurgency in Nigeria is not a uniform phenomenon but rather a network of diverse groups with different motives and goals. The most notable among these include Boko Haram, Niger Delta militancy, herdsman-farmers conflicts, and banditry. Boko Haram emerged in 2002 with the goal of establishing an Islamic state and enforcing Sharia law throughout Nigeria, escalating to armed rebellion in 2009 (Piate, 2005). By 2014, the group had seized large parts of northeastern Nigeria. In 2016, a significant split occurred, with one faction aligning with ISIS and becoming known as ISWAP, while the original Boko Haram faction led by Shekau continued its insurgency. ISWAP has since gained greater territorial control and operational strength in certain regions. Their methods include suicide bombings, kidnappings, raids on military and civilian targets, and destruction of infrastructure (Piate, 2025).

The Niger Delta militancy arose from long-standing grievances related to environmental damage caused by oil extraction, disputes over resource control, and feelings of neglect by the federal government (Piate, 2014). Groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) demand increased benefits from the region's oil wealth (Piate and Ukere, 2024). Their activities include pipeline sabotage, kidnapping of foreign oil workers, attacks on oil facilities, and illegal oil bunkering (Piate, 2025). Although the 2009 presidential amnesty program significantly curtailed organized militancy, sporadic incidents of pipeline vandalism and criminal acts continue. The herdsmen-farmers conflict is rapidly intensifying, especially in Nigeria's Middle Belt and spreading southward. This conflict involves clashes between nomadic pastoralists (mainly Fulani herdsmen) and settled farmers over land, water, and grazing rights. Contributing factors include desertification pushing herders south, population growth, agricultural expansion, climate change, and weak governance. These confrontations have grown more violent, with both sides often heavily armed, resulting in substantial casualties, displacement, and destruction of livelihoods (Piate, 2014).

Banditry and kidnapping are prevalent in the Northwest and parts of the North Central region. These are primarily criminal gangs responsible for mass abductions—particularly of schoolchildren—as well as cattle rustling and extortion. Although not driven by ideology, their activities greatly contribute to insecurity (Sunday and Piate, 2019; Sunday, Piate, Abuninye, Ishaya, and Edet, 2024; Sunday and Piate, 2024).

Together, these insurgencies pose serious challenges to Nigeria's national security, including loss of life, humanitarian crises, economic disruption, stagnation, and human rights violations. Insurgency presents a profound and multifaceted threat that undermines human security, economic progress, political stability, and the very existence of Nigeria as a nation (Piate, 2014). The link between insurgency and Nigeria's national security is deeply interwoven, posing grave risks to the country's stability, development, and citizens' well-being. This study therefore focuses on exploring the causal relationship between insurgency and national security in Nigeria, using key factors such as Boko Haram, Niger Delta militancy, herdsmen-farmers clashes, and banditry.

Theoretical Explication of the Discourse

The study applied the Human Security theory to frame its analysis. This theory marks a significant shift from traditional state-centered views of security by focusing primarily on the individual. It contends that true security goes beyond protecting borders or relying solely on military power; it requires ensuring people's safety, well-being, and dignity. Although the concept has evolved, its foundation lies in the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report, which broadened the definition of security to include freedom from want and fear, covering areas such as economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security. Key contributors to the theory's development include Mahbub ul Haq, Lloyd Axworthy, Sadako Ogata, Amartya Sen, Caroline Thomas, Roland Paris, and Sabina Alkire. The core premise of Human Security is that the individual, not the state, is the primary focus of security. It recognizes that threats extend beyond military aggression to include poverty, disease, environmental damage, human rights violations, food insecurity, economic instability, and political repression. These insecurities are often interconnected and can intensify one another for example, poverty may lead to conflict, which in turn worsens health and food crises. Human Security stresses the importance of addressing the root causes of insecurity and preventing threats before they escalate, rather than only responding after the fact.

Achieving human security requires coordinated efforts across various sectors such as development, health, environment, governance, and human rights, involving multiple actors including governments, international organizations, civil society, and local communities. Strategies combine top-down protection measures with bottom-up empowerment to help individuals build resilience and pursue their goals. While states bear the primary responsibility for protecting their citizens, international and regional bodies, as

well as civil society, play essential roles. Within the context of insurgency and national security, Human Security theory offers a valuable perspective for understanding and tackling Nigeria's complex security challenges. It suggests that insurgencies in Nigeria often stem not just from ideological extremism but from deep-rooted human insecurities. For instance, widespread poverty and economic marginalization especially among unemployed youth in regions like the North-East where Boko Haram operates create fertile ground for recruitment, as people vulnerable due to unmet basic needs may turn to insurgent groups that offer belonging, purpose, or financial incentives, even illicit ones.

Food and health insecurities also play a role; insurgency disrupts farming, trade routes, and humanitarian aid, leading to food shortages and malnutrition. The destruction of healthcare infrastructure and displacement further worsen health outcomes, deepening grievances and instability. Political insecurity and governance failures—such as corruption, weak rule of law, and political exclusion—erode trust in the state and make people more open to alternative power structures, including insurgents. Environmental insecurity, driven by climate change effects like desertification and resource scarcity, exacerbates conflicts such as herder-farmer clashes in the Middle Belt, creating new sources of violence and insecurity. The Human Security theory explains that Nigeria's national security is not just about defeating insurgent groups militarily but about building a society where individuals are protected from persistent threats to their lives, livelihoods, and dignity. Without addressing these fundamental human insecurities, Nigeria is likely to continue facing internal conflicts and instability.

Insurgency and Nigeria's National Security

Boko Haram poses a significant and complex threat due to its extremist ideology and objectives. The group rejects secular governance and seeks to replace Nigeria's secular and democratic foundations with a strict Islamic system, directly challenging the country's sovereignty (Alao, 2012; Alemika, 2013; Akinola, 2013; Crenshaw, 2011; Cronin, 2002). Boko Haram uses brutal tactics such as bombings, suicide attacks, mass killings, kidnappings, and the destruction of infrastructure, which destabilize Nigeria and create widespread fear and insecurity (Isyaku, 2013). At its height, Boko Haram controlled large areas in the Northeast, effectively challenging government authority and territorial control. Although military efforts have pushed the group and its splinter faction, ISWAP (Islamic State West Africa Province), out of many strongholds, both remain active in rural regions and continue to pose threats. The insurgency has spilled over into neighboring countries including Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, prompting the establishment of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to tackle the regional threat. This expansion highlights Boko Haram's impact beyond Nigeria's borders. The violence has triggered a massive humanitarian crisis, with millions displaced internally or seeking refuge abroad, alongside severe food shortages and disrupted livelihoods. These challenges put enormous pressure on Nigeria's resources and capacity to respond (Franks, 2006; Gupta, 2008; Gurr, 1970; Kundnani, 2015; Louise, 2006; Lutz and Lutz, 2011).

Economically, Boko Haram's insurgency has devastated the Northeast by disrupting agriculture, trade, and education. It has diverted large sums of national funds towards security efforts, undermining development and poverty reduction initiatives. The government's early difficulties in controlling the insurgency eroded public confidence in its ability to ensure safety, breeding disillusionment and resentment that further destabilize the country. Boko Haram exploits issues like poverty, unemployment, and perceived corruption to recruit marginalized youth, fueling a cycle of violence and extremism. A particularly dangerous aspect is Boko Haram's allegiance to international terrorist groups like ISIS, which provides it with training, funding, and ideological backing, thereby enhancing its operational capabilities and linking local insurgency to global terrorism networks (Piate and Eminue, 2022; Piate, 2017; Piate, Sunday, and Kia, 2024). Overall, Boko Haram's bombings across various parts of Nigeria have caused significant loss of life and property damage.

Despite efforts to combat Boko Haram, attacks on both security forces and civilians continue. The escalation of Boko Haram's violence has been linked to factors such as the influx of illegal immigrants into

Nigeria, foreign sponsorship, illegal importation of small arms, and overseas training of its members (Danjuma, 2014; Piate, 2025). Boko Haram undermines national security by challenging state authority, endangering citizens, destabilizing the economy, creating humanitarian emergencies, and fostering conditions favorable for further radicalization and conflict. Addressing this ongoing threat requires a comprehensive national security strategy that integrates military operations with socio-economic development, good governance, and counter-radicalization initiatives.

Table 1: TERRORIST ATTACK IN NIGERIA

S/N	Date	Location Of Incident	Suspects	Victims
1	19/10/1986	Dale Giwa's residence, Ikeja, Lagos	IBB	Dele Giwa
2	31/5/1995	Ilorin Stadium	Unknown	Number unknown
3	18/1/1996	Durbar Hotel, Kaduna	Suspects killed, names not known	Number unknown
4	20/1/1996	Aminu Kano International Airport, Kano	Unknown	Number unknown
5	11/1/1996	Ikeja Cantonment, Lagos	Unknown	Number unknown
6	25/4/1996	Air Force Base, Ikeja, Lagos	Unknown	Number unknown
7	Not specified	Murtala Muhammed Airport	Unknown	Chief Security Officer
8	16/12/1996	Not specified	Unknown	Convoy of Col. Marwa
9	18/12/1996	Not specified	Unknown	Task force on environmental sanitation
10	17/5/1997	Not specified	Unknown	Nigeria Army bus involved
11	22/4/1997	Evans Square	Unknown	3 dead, multiple injured
12	12/5/1997	Abuja Airport	Unknown	Lt. Col. Oladipo Diya survived
13	27/1/2002	Ibadan	Unknown	Victims from Federal Ministry of Works & Housing; exact number unknown
14	26/7/2009	Bauchi State, Dutsen Tanshi	First clash with security forces	39 civilians, 2 policemen, 1 soldier killed
15	27/7/2009	Yobe State, Potiskum Divisional HQ	First attack leading to HQ invasion	5 civilians, 3 policemen killed
16	29/7/2009	Yobe State, Mamundo Village	Clash with security personnel	33 Boko Haram dead
17	29/7/2009	Borno State	Full battle between Boko Haram & security forces	Scores killed, base destroyed
18	7/1/2010	Borno State, Gazangi-Tashan Gandu	Boko Haram gunmen on motorcycles	3 civilians killed
19	2/4/2010	Bauchi State, Maiduguri Prison	Attackers	1 prison warder killed
20	15/5/2010	Warri, Delta State	Niger Delta Militants	Casualty figures not available
21	1/10/2010	Abuja	Boko Haram	Casualty figures not available
22	8/4/2011	Suleja, Niger State	Boko Haram	Casualty figures not available
23	26/4/2011	Maiduguri, Borno State	Boko Haram	Casualty figures not available

S/N	Date	Location Of Incident	Suspects	Victims
24	1/1/2011	Abuja	Boko Haram	Incident at Army market; victim details unknown
25	28/1/2011	Bauchi State	Assassination of ANPP governorship candidate Alhaji Modu Fannami Gubio	5 injured
26	2/3/2011	Kaduna State	Attack on divisional police officer's residence	2 policemen killed
27	7/4/2011	Borno State	Bomb explosion	Numerous injured
28	8/4/2011	Kaduna State, Independent Electoral Commission office, Suleja	Bomb explosion	11 civilians killed
29	21/4/2011	Borno State	Two suspected bomb makers	2 Boko Haram members killed
30	25/4/2011	Kano State	Three bomb blasts at Tudu Palace Hotel and Kano motor park in Maiduguri	Casualty figures not available
31	5/5/2011	Bauchi State, Damaturu	Bomb explosion	1 policeman injured
32	5/5/2011	FCT Abuja	Attack on Bauchi State Government House in Abuja	1 civilian and 1 policeman killed, others injured
33	5/5/2011	Bauchi State	Attack on Islamic clerics Sheikh Goni Tljiam and Mallam Alhaji Abur	2 clerics killed
34	9/5/2011	Bauchi State	Attack on Ibrahim Dudu Gobe	1 civilian killed
35	13/5/2011	Bauchi State, Londo Chinki, Maiduguri	Bomb explosion	2 civilians killed
36	15/5/2011	Bauchi State	Bomb explosion at military barracks	3 policemen and 2 soldiers killed
37	29/5/2011	Bauchi State	Attack on Shehu of Borno's brother Alhaji Abba Anas Graba El-Kanemi	14 soldiers killed
38	31/5/2011	Borno State, Maiduguri police station	Attack	1 civilian killed
39	28/5/2011	Borno State, Mammy Market, Shandawank Barracks	Bomb blast	13 civilians killed, 40 injured
40	29/6/2011	Bauchi State, Zuba of Kubwa, Abuja	Explosion	8 civilians lost their legs
41	1/6/2011	Borno State, Maiduguri police station	Attack	5 policemen killed
42	12/6/2011	Bauchi State, Damboa	Attack on drinking spot	4 civilians killed
43	16/6/2011	Bauchi State, Damboa	Bomb explosion	4 civilians killed
44	16/6/2011	FCT Abuja	Bomb explosion at force headquarters	2 policemen killed
45	16/5/2011	FCT Abuja	Massive explosion at national police headquarters	Casualty figures not available
46	4/7/2011	Borno State	Bomb blast	4 civilians killed, 10 injured

S/N	Date	Location Of Incident	Suspects	Victims
47	13/7/2011	Borno State	Bomb blast	5 civilians killed, 2 soldiers injured
48	26/8/2011	FCT Abuja, UN House	Bomb blast	33 civilians and 11 UN personnel killed, several injured
49	17/10/2011	Borno State	Boko Haram attack on police barracks	14 vehicles destroyed
50	8/12/2011	Kaduna State	Bomb blast	15 civilians killed, several injured
51	20/12/2011	Yobe State	Bomb blast	3 suspected Boko Haram members injured
52	25/12/2011	Niger State	Bomb blast at St. Theresa's Catholic Church	Multiple injured
53	15/1/2012	Gombe	Attack on Deeper Life Bible Church	8 worshippers killed, 18 injured
54	16/1/2012	Adamawa State	Attack on Christ Apostolic Church, Jimeta	16 worshippers killed
55	21/1/2012	Kano State	Multiple bomb blasts at police stations	200 killed (civilians and policemen)
56	27/1/2012	Kano State	Bomb blast	2 civilians killed
57	20/9/2012	Plateau State	Attack on state capital	9 civilians killed
58	17/10/2012	Plateau State	Attack on security forces	1 soldier killed by machete, 3 Boko Haram killed

Source: Piate (2025).

The origin of the Niger Delta crisis is rooted in three main issues: the minority question, resource control, and environmental degradation. Niger Delta militancy refers to the armed resistance and violent acts carried out by various groups within the region. This crisis stems from longstanding grievances, mainly the perception that the area's vast oil wealth is exploited without sufficient development or environmental safeguards for local communities. At its core, the conflict arises from unfair social relations governing how oil profits are produced and shared, coupled with the negative effects on the fragile Niger Delta ecosystem. The dispute involves the Nigerian government and oil companies on one side and the oil-producing communities on the other. The key issues revolve around the oil-rich environment, the distribution of its wealth, and the survival of local inhabitants who rely on the ecosystem for their livelihoods. The host communities argue that since the oil is extracted from their lands and they bear the environmental damage caused by oil production, they deserve proper compensation, a safe and clean environment, and a fair share of the oil revenues. Conversely, the government and oil companies prioritize maximizing profits according to agreements and national laws (Oluwadare and Oyeboode, 2013; Okoli, 2007).

Okoli (2013) summarizes the roots of the Niger Delta crisis as arising from the social, political, economic, and ecological tensions in the region. These include state exploitation and violence, corporate recklessness and negligence, environmental harm, socio-economic and political marginalization, and widespread poverty all issues for which both the Nigerian state and multinational oil firms share responsibility. Over time, the conflict has escalated from peaceful protests to armed insurgency, with militant groups attacking oil facilities, kidnapping, and engaging in piracy. From a national security perspective, Niger Delta militancy poses a serious internal threat to Nigeria's stability. Attacks on pipelines, flow stations, and infrastructure severely disrupt oil production. Since oil revenues make up the majority of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings and a large share of its national budget, these

disruptions cause economic problems like budget shortfalls, cuts in government spending on essential services, and overall economic instability.

The insecurity in the Niger Delta discourages foreign oil companies and investors, hindering economic growth and job creation both locally and nationally. Illegal oil bunkering, often conducted by criminals sometimes working with militants or corrupt officials, causes massive financial losses to the government and oil companies. The conflict has also fueled the widespread circulation of illegal weapons, which exacerbates militancy, crime, cult violence, and communal conflicts across the region and beyond, threatening broader public safety. Instability in the Niger Delta can even affect global oil prices and supplies, attracting international concern and potential intervention. Therefore, Niger Delta militancy is not just a regional problem but a complex national security challenge impacting Nigeria's economy, political stability, social cohesion, and global reputation.

Table 2: MILITANTS ACTIVITIES IN THE NIGER DELTA FROM 2002 – 2008

Date/Year	Event	Location	Company Affected
May 2002	Militant youths attacked, 30 houses burned, 3 people killed	Bori, Ogoniland, Rivers State	Private houses
March 2003	Militant attack	Upomani village	Total and ELF tank farm; 5 soldiers killed, property worth billions destroyed
Nov. 2004	Ijaw youths protested	Odima Community, Brass, Bayelsa State	Shell Petroleum Development Company station attacked, shut down, and occupied
January 2006	Militants kidnapped 4 foreign workers	Forcados export terminus	Shell's offshore E.A. oilfield shut down; crude oil pipeline blown up
February 2006	Militants attacked, abducted nine workers	Not specified	US oil services company, NNPC, and Shell loading platform
March 2006	Militant attack	Not specified	Agip and Italian oil company pipelines blown up
May 2006	Unknown gunmen killed oil executive	Port Harcourt	Baker Hughes (American company)
May 11, 2006	Gunmen kidnapped 3 oil workers	Port Harcourt	Saipem, Italian oil contracting firm
June 2, 2006	Gunmen kidnapped 6 Britons, 1 Canadian, 1 American	Port Harcourt	Bulford Dolphin oil rig (Norwegian oilfield services)
June 7, 2006	Militants attacked oil facilities, killed 5 soldiers, kidnapped 5 South Korean contractors	Niger Delta	Shell
June 20, 2006	Unknown gunmen kidnapped two Filipinos with Beaufort International	Port Harcourt	Beaufort International
July 2006	Gunmen kidnapped Michael Los; Niger Delta Mob seized Agip Ogbainbiri Flow Station taking 24 workers hostage	Bayelsa	Dutch Oil
August 2006	Armed men kidnapped Schiffarth	Port Harcourt	Schiffarth Guido (Bilfinger and Berger)
August 2006	Gunmen abducted 3 Filipino oil workers	Port Harcourt	Filipino oil workers
August 9-10, 2006	Kidnapping of foreign oil workers	Port Harcourt	Norwegian, Belgian, and Moroccan contractors

Date/Year	Event	Location	Company Affected
August 2006	Kidnapping of foreign oil workers at nightclub	Port Harcourt	Oil companies lost six (2 Britons, 1 German, 1 Irish, 1 Pole, 1 American)
August 2006	Gunmen kidnapped a Lebanese	Port Harcourt	Lebanese company
August 2006	Gunmen kidnapped oil worker	Port Harcourt	Saipem, Italian oil
Oct. 2006	Gunmen ambushed oil workers at Shell facilities in Cawthorne Channel boats supplying Shell in Niger Delta	Niger Delta	Royal Dutch Shell (25 Nigerian employees seized)
Oct. 2006	Militants raided	Port Harcourt	ExxonMobil lost 7 foreign workers (4 Britons, 1 Indonesian, 1 Malaysian, 1 Romanian)
Nov. 2006	Militants raided survey ship off Bayelsa coast	Bayelsa	Petroleum Geo-Service (PGS) lost British and American employees
Nov. 22, 2006	Militant/Soldier clash	Port Harcourt	British Oil Company lost a worker during rescue attempt
Dec. 7, 2006	Gunmen raided residential facility	Port Harcourt	Oil company lost 3 Italians and 1 Lebanese
Dec. 14, 2006	Gunmen invaded Nun River logistics base	Bayelsa State	Royal Dutch Shell lost 5 workers to kidnapping
Dec. 18, 2006	Car bomb explosions	Port Harcourt	Agip and Shell Petroleum Development Company residential facilities damaged
Dec. 21, 2006	Militants attacked oil facilities	Obagi oil field, Rivers State	Total Oil lost 3 staff
Jan. 5, 2007	Gunmen kidnapped and bombed facilities	Port Harcourt, Bonny Island, Warri	Chinese Telecom Firm and Shell PDC lost workers and residential facilities
Jan. 10, 2007	Gunmen attacked South Korean base	Bayelsa State	South Korea's Daewoo Engineering lost 10 workers to kidnapping
Jan. 16, 2007	Gunmen attacked boat operated by Hyundai	Around Bonny Island export terminal	South Korean firm Hyundai lost 3 people including a Dutch oil worker
Jan. 20, 2007	Militants seized 24 Filipino crew members	Around Warri Port	German shipping line Baco-liner cargo ship
Jan. 23, 2007	Gunmen kidnapped two engineers	Port Harcourt	Foreign oil company lost an American and a Briton
Jan. 25, 2007	Militants kidnapped	Bayelsa State	CNPC (Chinese National Petroleum Company) and Shell lost 9 employees
Feb. 6, 2007	Gunmen kidnapped oil workers	Port Harcourt – Owerri road	Filipino oil workers
Feb. 7, 2007	Gunmen kidnapped oil workers	Port Harcourt	Total Oil lost a Filipina and a French worker Gerard Laporal

Date/Year	Event	Location	Company Affected
Feb. 2007	Militants raided church/public facilities	Port Harcourt	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints lost 4 missionaries
Feb. 2007	Militants raided	Port Harcourt	Hydrodrive lost 3 Croatian workers

Source: Piate (2025)

The herdsmen-farmers conflict refers to the longstanding and intensifying disputes between nomadic pastoralists and settled farming communities. At its core, this conflict arises from competition over vital resources such as land and water, which is further aggravated by various socio-economic, environmental, and political factors. From a national security perspective, this clash is more than a local issue—it poses a serious threat to the country’s stability, peace, and overall well-being. It challenges the government’s fundamental responsibility to ensure the safety of its citizens and uphold law and order. These conflicts often escalate into violence, causing widespread deaths, injuries, and the displacement of thousands, leading to internal displacement and humanitarian crises that strain the resources of host communities. Additionally, the destruction of farmland and attacks on farming populations contribute to food insecurity by sharply reducing agricultural production, which in turn heightens hunger, poverty, and the risk of widespread social unrest. Beyond agriculture, the violence disrupts economic activities in affected areas, resulting in loss of property, markets, and investment opportunities. This undermines local economies and contributes to broader national economic instability.

The herdsmen-farmers clashes frequently take on ethnic and religious overtones, with predominantly Muslim Fulani herders often clashing with largely Christian farming communities. This deepens ethnic and religious divides, erodes trust, and threatens national cohesion. The ongoing violence has also led to an increase in the availability of small arms and light weapons among both groups, as they arm themselves for protection or retaliation. The proliferation of weapons intensifies the violence and complicates peace efforts. Moreover, the persistent nature of these conflicts diverts security resources and attention from other pressing threats such as terrorism (including Boko Haram), banditry, and militancy, stretching security forces thin and sometimes leaving areas ungoverned. Due to perceptions of inadequate government response, some communities form self-defense groups and ethnic militias. While initially created for protection, these groups often exacerbate violence through extrajudicial actions, further complicating the security environment. Ultimately, the herdsmen-farmers conflict is a complex, multifaceted issue that weakens national security by generating insecurity, damaging social trust, disrupting livelihoods, and straining the state’s capacity to protect its citizens and maintain peace (Gambo and Nankap, 2022; Caleb, 2022).

Table 3: HERDSMEN-FARMERS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA BETWEEN JANUARY 2016 AND JUNE 2018

S/N	Date	Attack & Location	Immediate Cause(s)	Casualties/Degree of Destruction
2016				
1	January 6	Udini Ruwa, Nasarawa State	Destruction of farm crops	38 people killed, many others wounded
2	January 17	Gareji village, Taraba State		3 people killed
3	January 23	Demsare, Wunamokoh, Dikajam, and Taboungo, Adamawa State	Retaliatory attack	60 people killed including a police DPO; properties destroyed
4	February 2	Agatu, Benue State		7 people killed; community in mourning

S/N	Date	Attack & Location	Immediate Cause(s)	Casualties/Degree of Destruction
5	February 7	Tombu, Buruku LGA, Benue State	Conflict between parties	10 people killed; community raided
6	February 11	Abbi, Enugu State		2 killed, several missing
7	February 23	A village in Agatu, Benue State		50 deaths recorded
8	February 24 & 28	Agatu, Benue State	Retaliation for 2013 killing of a prominent Fulani man by Agatu people	500 killed and wounded; others displaced
9	March 2	Ossissa, Ndokwa, Delta State		5 killed, some wounded; residents fled as houses destroyed
10	March 7, 8, 13 & 17	Mbaya-Tombo, Benue State	Dispute over farm crop destruction	Over 35 people died; properties destroyed
11	March 26	Ugwunesi, Awgu LGA, Enugu State	Retaliation attack	2 soldiers and 18 others killed; thousands displaced; over 1000 homes destroyed
12	April 25	Nimbo villages (multiple) in Uzo-Uwani LGA		48 killed; ten houses and a church burned; vehicles, motorcycles, and animals destroyed
13	April 3-7	Ohali-Elu, Rivers State	Conflict with communities	16 people killed
14	April 9	Ilado, Ondo State	Attack on Hon. Olu Falae's security guard by herdsmen	Security guard killed
15	April 10	Dori and Mesuma villages, Gashaka LGA, Taraba State		15 killed; houses razed
16	April 10	Angai, Dashole, Dori, Mesuwa villages, Taraba State	Dispute over farmland	Between 15 and 44 killed
17	April 20	Agatu, Benue State	Attack on policemen	Some injured; one policeman missing
18	April 25	Ndiagu Attakwu, Nkanu-West LGA, Enugu State	Herdsmen invaded community; initial disturbance followed by nighttime raid	8 murdered including a seminarian and pregnant woman; houses destroyed
19	May 2	Benue State		39 killed

S/N	Date	Attack & Location	Immediate Cause(s)	Casualties/Degree of Destruction
20	May 6	Coromo, Dan-nacha, Mutum Biyu communities, Gassol LGA, Taraba	Land dispute between herdsmen and Tiv community	12 killed; 13 houses burned; 80 seriously injured
21	May 14	Illah community, Oshimili North LGA, Delta State	Fulani nomads tried to rape a woman who resisted and was beheaded	Woman beheaded; two others severely wounded
22	May 15	Tarfi village, Binnev ward, Buruku LGA, Benue State		12 killed; many injured and missing
23	June 25	Koh community, Girei LGA, Adamawa State	Fulani herder trespassed on farmland; conflict erupted after alarm	8 killed
24	June 17	Logo LGA, Benue State		10 killed; many farmers displaced
25	June 19	Ossissa community, Ndokwa East LGA, Delta State	Victim unknowingly passed through herdsmen hideout holding kidnapped victims	1 killed
26	July 11	Tse-Adayol, Logo LGA, Benue State		81 killed
27	July 12	Gbagyi communities, Bosso LGA, Niger State		At least 11 killed in clash with suspected herdsmen
28	July 25	Tse-Adayol, Logo LGA, Benue State	Grazing rights dispute	10 killed, 1 missing, 2 injured
29	August 1-3, 13	Golkofa, Jema'a LGA, Adamawa State		20 killed
30	August 25	Ndiagu Attakwu Akegbe community, Nkanu West LGA		1 killed; seminarian and 5 injured
31	September 25-26	Godogodo, Kaduna		8 slaughtered; 8 wounded
32	October 15	Godogodo, Kaduna		At least 40 killed; many houses burnt
33	December 17	Sabon Gidan village, Dan Anacha town, Taraba State	Attack and retaliation	20 feared killed; many missing; properties destroyed

S/N	Date	Attack & Location	Immediate Cause(s)	Casualties/Degree of Destruction
34	November 25	Nimbo community, Uzo-Uwani LGA, Enugu State	Retaliatory attack	8 massacred (7 men, 1 woman)
2017				
35	January 9	Abraka and Obiaruku, Ethiope East and Ukwuani LGAs, Delta State		At least 5 killed
36	January 16	Rafin Gona and Gbagy villages, Bosso LGA, Niger State		9 killed including a police inspector and a Civil Defence ASP; 6,000 displaced
37	January 17	Zango-Kataf, Kaduna State	Herdsmen opened fire at Samaru Kataf market	3 killed; 5 injured
38	January 24	Ipiga village, Ohimini LGA, Benue State	Grazed cattle destroyed farmland	15 killed; 2 herders and 13 villagers died in fight
39	January 24	Jema'a LGA, Kaduna State	Herdsmen waylaid car carrying students from Kafanchan	5 students shot dead
40	February 10	Rukumawa, Tsafe LGA, Zamfara State	Clash between community and suspected herdsmen	8 killed
41	February 2	Southern Kaduna, Kaduna State	Fulani herdsmen attacked four communities	About 21 killed
42	March 2	Mbahimin, Gwer East LGA, Benue State	Renewed hostilities between herdsmen and farmers	At least 10 killed
43	March 6	Omumu community, Ika South LGA, Delta State	Clash between herdsmen and locals	6 killed
44	March 8	Tse Akaa, Mba'abaji, Tse Orlalu, Logo, Benue State	Fight caused by Tiv youths obstructing cattle breeders	15 farmers killed
45	March 11	Tvi community, Buruku LGA, Benue State		10 killed

S/N	Date	Attack & Location	Immediate Cause(s)	Casualties/Degree of Destruction
46	March 14	Umuobasikuw, Ozuitem, Bende LGA, Abia State	Clash between herdsmen and locals	1 killed, several injured
47	March 20	Zaki Biam, Benue State	Grazing rights dispute	50 killed
48	March 27	Adam village, Kwande LGA, Benue State	Herdsmen attacked farmers	1 killed, 1 injured; women reportedly raped
49	March 28	Emuhu community, Ika South LGA, Delta State	Attack by suspected herdsmen	3 killed, 6 injured
50	April 1	Obio Usiere, Eniong Abatim, Odukpani LGA, Cross River State	Community raid	At least 10 killed
51	May 5	Ussa and Takum LGAs, Taraba State	Clash between farmers and herdsmen	15 killed, many injured
52	May 8	Tse-Akaa village, Logo LGA, Benue State	Clash with herdsmen	3 killed
53	May 12	Ossissa, Ndokwa East LGA, Delta State	Farmers ambushed on way home	Herdsmen beheaded one motorcyclist and six farmers
54	May 13	Logo LGA, Benue State		8 killed
55	May 18	Afam Uku, Oyigbo LGA, Rivers State	Herdsmen attack	2 killed
56	May 22	Ewu community, Esan Central LGA, Edo State	Herdsmen invaded farm, raped and strangled two women	2 killed, 1 wounded; crops destroyed; people displaced
57	July 20	Kajuru villages, Kaduna State	Retaliatory attacks	33 killed; Fulani properties destroyed
58	September 9	Ancha village, Bassa LGA, Plateau State	Retaliation for death of herding community boy	19 killed
59	October 16	Nkiedonwhro village, Bassa LGA, Plateau State		At least 29 killed, mostly women and children
60	October 27	Irigwe kingdom, Bassa LGA, Plateau State		75 killed, 23 injured, about 13,726 displaced, 489 houses burnt
61	October 30	Yendi	Attack and reprisal	3 feared dead

S/N	Date	Attack & Location	Immediate Cause(s)	Casualties/Degree of Destruction
62	November 3	Tombo ward, Gaambetiev, Logo LGA, Benue State	Reaction to grazing law	1 killed, 1 injured
63	November 21	Kikan, Kwadomti and Shefaran villages, Numan LGA, Adamawa State	Retaliation attack	52 Fulani herdsmen killed
64	December 4	Five villages, Adamawa State	Herdsmen retaliated killing of 51 members in Kikan	86 killed; properties destroyed
65	December 28	Minda, Lau LGA, Taraba State	Herdsmen grazed on farmer's guinea corn farm; farmer complained	4 killed; farmlands destroyed
66	December 31	Gaambe-Tiev, Ayilamo, Turan communities, Logo LGA, Benue State	Fulani herdsmen invaded communities	50 killed including 9 Benue livestock guards
2018				
67	January 1	Guma and Logo LGAs, Benue State	Response to Benue State anti-grazing law	73 farmers killed; dozens of livestock guards killed
68	January 23	Ardo Kola, Adamawa State		9 family members killed
69	January 24	Bokkos, Plateau State		7 killed
70	January 31	Birnin Gwari, Kaduna State		9 killed
71	February 2	Song, Adamawa State		10 killed
72	February 5	Attack on Governor Ortom's Farmhouse		2 killed
73	February 6	Obi, Nasarawa State		8 killed
74	February 8	Shellen, Adamawa State	Communal clash	6 killed
75	February 10	Benue State	Herdsmen ambushed and killed 2 police officers	2 police officers killed
76	February 10	Bassa, Plateau State		3 killed
77	February 11	Jema'a, Kaduna State		4 killed

S/N	Date	Attack & Location	Immediate Cause(s)	Casualties/Degree of Destruction
78	February 12	Guma, Benue State	Herdsmen attacked civil defence officers	2 Civil Defence Officers killed
79	February 26	Kajuru, Kaduna State	Worship center torched	12 killed
80	February 27	Demsa, Adamawa State		20 killed
81	March 3	Sardauna LGA, Taraba State	Herdsmen attacked	15 killed
82	March 5	Omosu Okana villages, Okpokwu LGA, Benue State	Herdsmen retaliatory attack	24 killed, many wounded and missing
83	March 8	Nzharuvo village, Bassa LGA, Plateau State	Herdsmen attacked	5 killed
84	March 12	Enyanwu Igwe village, Izzi LGA, Ebonyi State	Herdsmen attacked villages	4 killed; economic trees and property damaged
85	March 14	Ogane-Enugu and Ikende communities, Dekina LGA, Kogi State	Herdsmen invaded at night	25 killed; several houses burnt
86	March 19	Agbenema, Opada/Ofejiji ward, Omala LGA, Kogi State	Herdsmen invaded community	19 killed; houses burnt
87	April 12	Jandeikyula village, Wukari LGA, Taraba State		25 killed; property worth hundreds of millions destroyed
88	April 14 & 16	Several communities, Nasarawa State		32 Tiv villagers killed; many displaced
89	April 24	St. Ignatius Quasi Parish, Ukpormbalom, Gwer East LGA, Benue State	Herdsmen attacked church	2 priests and 17 worshippers killed; over 100 houses burnt; people displaced
90	April 28	Onocha-Olona,		
91	May 25	Yorro LGA, Taraba State	Retaliatory attacks	5 killed
92	June 4	Dinya village, Gassol LGA, Taraba State	Land dispute	5 killed
93	June 5	Mararaba Udege, Aisa, Aguma communities, Nasarawa State	Retaliation after shooting of a Fulani by an Agatu man	3 SARS operatives and 8 farmers killed
94	June 6	Tse Shan, Tse Nyamkyume n Saghev, Guma LGA, and Tse Ngo Jov Tombo, Logo LGA		9 killed; over 45 houses burnt; several missing

S/N	Date	Attack & Location	Immediate Cause(s)	Casualties/Degree of Destruction
95	June 21 & 23-25	Riyom, Barikin Ladi, Plateau State	Longstanding land conflict	218 killed including 5 Fulani herders; 50 houses, 15 motorbikes, and 2 vehicles burned

Source: Author's compilation from reportages of various online mass media and the work of Oli, Ibekwe, & Nwankwo (2018)

Banditry, within the framework of national security, refers to organized acts of violent crime committed by outlawed and marauding groups or individuals commonly referred to as bandits. These actors operate beyond the bounds of lawful authority, often employing force, advanced weaponry, and intimidation to achieve their aims. Their operations typically involve kidnapping for ransom where victims are abducted in exchange for financial payments alongside armed robbery targeting individuals, communities, and businesses. They also engage in cattle rustling, a significant economic threat in many rural areas, and carry out attacks on highways and entire communities. Bandits usually operate from ungoverned or poorly policed spaces, such as forests, mountainous areas, or abandoned villages, where state presence is minimal or absent. The violence associated with banditry results in high casualty rates and severe psychological trauma among victims and communities, thereby undermining human security a critical element of national security. Additionally, the frequent payment of ransoms drains both personal and public resources that could otherwise support essential public services. If not effectively addressed, banditry can evolve from isolated criminal acts into a broader national security crisis. It has the potential to destabilize entire regions, cripple economic activities, and threaten the legitimacy and authority of the state (Beckett, 2001; Murad, 2019; Omeni, 2018; Omeni, 2020).

Conclusion

The study explored the nature of insurgency in Nigeria and its far-reaching implications for national security, emphasizing that the country faces diverse and evolving forms of insurgency. These threats pose complex and significant challenges that cannot be addressed through a one-size-fits-all approach. Insurgency in Nigeria is not a singular or uniform movement but a network of various groups with different goals and motivations. Their actions have resulted in a cycle of violence, displacement, economic instability, and social setbacks factors that deeply erode the core elements of national security. The study found that although Nigeria has responded with a mix of military interventions, humanitarian assistance, and some development efforts, persistent issues such as poverty, weak governance, corruption, and the adaptive nature of insurgent groups continue to undermine these responses and allow insurgency to persist. To address this, the study recommends that Nigeria shift from a reactive and military-heavy approach to a more proactive and integrated strategy. This should involve addressing root causes such as marginalization and insecurity, while also enhancing intelligence gathering, fostering community engagement, and building trust between citizens and security institutions.

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